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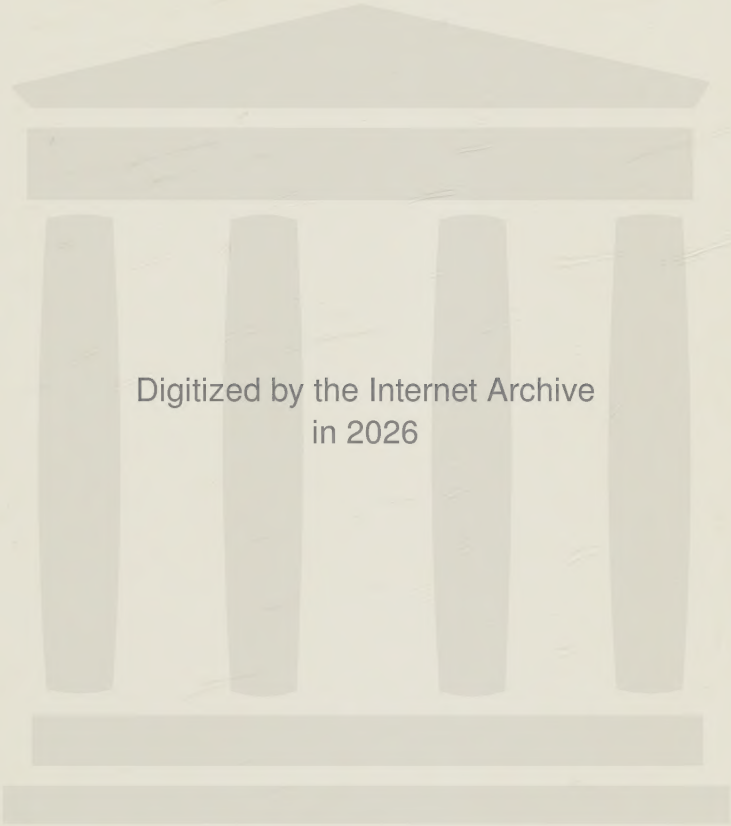

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HEAD OF THE ALBIZZI MADONNA.
BY LEONARDO DA VINCI. 1478.
(PHOTOGRAPHED IN PROFILE).

LEONARDO DA VINCI
SCULPTOR

Collegio S. Petri Apud Radley
Alumni Gratiae

'. . . neque tu pessima munerum
Ferres divite me scilicet artium
Quas aut Parrhasius protulit aut Scopas
Hic saxo liquidis ille coloribus
Sollers nunc hominem ponere nunc Deum . . .
. . . neque
Si chartae sileant quod bene feceris
Mercedem tuleris . . .'

LEONARDO DA VINCI SCULPTOR

An Illustrated Essay on the Albizzi Madonna, formerly known as the Signa Madonna, carved by Leonardo in 1478.

BY

THEODORE ANDREA COOK

LONDON

ARTHUR L. HUMPHREYS

187 PICCADILLY, W.

1923

ART AND MUSIC DEPARTMENT

'Quod non imber edax non Aquilo impotens
Possit diruere aut innumerabilis
Annorum series et fuga temporum . . .
. . . Non omnis moriar multaque pars mei
Vitabit Libitinam . . .'

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PREFACE.

IN 1897, Mr. G. B. Dibblee, now Bursar of All Souls', bought in Italy the stone and gesso carving of a Madonna and Child, which is reproduced in the frontispiece. He obtained it directly from the owner of the house on which the carving had remained since it was made more than four centuries earlier. A few people saw the group in Manchester, and then for several years it was placed in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, where it was highly valued. Its only appearance in London has been at the Burlington Fine Arts Club Italian Sculpture Exhibition, in 1912, when Mr. Eric Maclagan described it as follows in the catalogue :—

'32. *The Virgin and Child—School of Verrocchio—Relief in stucco.*

'The Virgin, seen half length behind a parapet, on which the Child stands, naked, his feet resting on a small cushion. His right hand is raised in blessing, his left rests on a small apple or ball. The Virgin's dress is arranged in elaborate folds ; her hair is partly uncovered, but a light veil falls over the back of her head.

'This is perhaps the best example of a number of reliefs executed in the workshop of Verrocchio and derived from a common type. In the terra-cotta relief by Verrocchio himself in the Museo Nazionale at Florence (from S. Maria Nuova) the Child is on his mother's left; in the marble relief, also in the Museo Nazionale (180) and in all the other versions, the Child is on the dexter side. Here the Child's left hand is by his side. To the same group belong a marble version with added aureoles, recently in private possession at Florence, a painted stucco with cherub heads in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum at Berlin (102), and, with some other alterations, the terra-cotta in the Victoria and Albert Museum (7576–1861). In a

second group, of which this is the most beautiful representation, the Child's hand rests upon an apple; there are versions in enamelled terra-cotta (made in the della Robbia *bottega*) in the sacristy of S. Croce at Florence, and in the museum at Prato. A terra-cotta in the museum at Birmingham shows the same type with some variations. In a third group, represented by the marble relief from Poggio Imperiale and by No. 21 in this exhibition (formerly the property of the late Sir Hubert Parry), the Child is partly draped, but the composition remains almost identical. The whole series may be compared with the group of pictures of which No. 296 in the National Gallery is a characteristic example. There are casts of the two marble reliefs in the Museo Nazionale and the V. and A. Museum.

'Height, 33 in.; width, 23½ in. (·840 × ·600 m.). Lent by Mr. G. B. Dibblee.'

Apart from the extract from the catalogue just quoted, the only other passage of print which I have been able to find concerning this group is the following, from page 123 of *Verrocchio*, by Maud Cruttwell (London: Duckworth & Co., 1904):—'Another work of greater artistic merit, probably by the same hand [*Francesco di Simone*], is in the possession of Mr. G. B. Dibblee, at present on loan in the Fortnum Collection, Oxford. It is in uncoloured gesso and represents the Madonna holding the upright Child on her knee. It would be difficult to say which influence most predominates—that of Verrocchio, of Desiderio, or of Fra Filippo, and in this case the combination is more successful and attractive than in any other work of this group.'

A photograph of this very beautiful carving was first published in the *Field* for November 29th, 1913, in which the attribution of the work to Leonardo was first publicly asserted. In December, 1919, with the assistance of Mr. Dibblee, I wrote, for private circulation only, a short

pamphlet of thirty-four pages, with eleven illustrations, in which a few proofs of authenticity were collected and discussed. I have now been requested to issue for the general public interested in such questions a more extended statement of the case, with details which had not come to light three years ago, and with the inestimable additional advantage of the approval of Signor Adolfo Venturi, the greatest Italian authority on Leonardo now alive, who was good enough to refer to my pamphlet in his eloquent and convincing statement that the carving, then distinguished as the Signa Madonna, was an undoubted work of Leonardo, and the only specimen of his sculpture known to have survived. My introductory chapter, therefore, consists of the translation of Signor Venturi's opinion, together with his original article; and I desire here to recognise very gratefully the magnanimity with which he has admitted the value both of Mr. Dibblee's discovery and of my own subsequent investigations. It is not the first time that foreigners have had the happiness of acknowledging the generous courtesy of an Italian in a field which he had made his own and in the most distinctive art of his fortunate and lovely land.

Where there is no direct documentary evidence, and an attribution must largely rest upon the verdict of individual taste, it is important to consider all the relevant details which can be collected concerning the history and date of the work or the personality and record of its maker. Of no artist who wrote about his own work have we so many manuscripts in his own hand as have survived of Leonardo's. The best short description of them and their adventures may be read in *Léonard de Vinci, Artiste et Savant*, by Gabriel Séailles;

seventh edition. (Paris: Perrin. 1919.) Though we see but the salvage of the wreck, there are about seven thousand pages of manuscripts left; and in this case the claims of authenticity are notably assisted by the peculiarities natural to a left-handed man. Some fifteen years ago I had the opportunity of studying these manuscripts in France, Italy, Austria, England, and elsewhere; I possess hundreds of photographs of them, and the admirable translations of Mr. E. McCurdy (Duckworth, 1906) have here saved me from repeating the laborious process of deciphering Italian in a mirror. Richter's work is also indispensable.

No one who has not examined this extraordinary and scattered collection in its entirety can be said fully to realise the astounding marks of universal genius they reveal on the literary side alone, apart altogether from many hundreds of sketches which would suffice to justify their author's legendary fame even if nothing more of him were known to us. In these brief pages it would be inappropriate to dilate upon the numberless experiments these manuscripts have treated with a masterly independence of thought and a relentless search for truth that were unrivalled by any one of his contemporaries; and I have only said so much as this in order to emphasise the importance of the few quotations from Leonardo's own words relating to my immediate subject which will here be found. Though it may be true to-day, if I may slightly alter Walter Pater's words, that Leonardo was 'in many things great rather by what [he] designed or aspired to do than by what [he] actually achieved'; yet it is even more accurate to use of the great Italian the phrase which Dürer uses of himself: 'What he set down with the pen, he did with the hand.'

PREFACE.

Of many masterpieces the most authentic traces that remain are preserved in Leonardo's manuscripts. From one of these originals (now in the Uffizi) I have reproduced a few lines in the body of my text. My other illustrations were chiefly suggested by Mr. Eric Maclagan's illuminating note in the Exhibition Catalogue quoted above. The series could be very largely extended, even within my own comparatively restricted researches. But I think enough has here been published to indicate the points of my argument as to the instant recognition, by subsequent artists of his time, of the improvement made when Leonardo altered in 1478 the earlier group designed by his master, Andrea Verrocchio ; and as to the immeasurable superiority of Leonardo's sculpture, not only to that of Verrocchio, but to those of all his later imitators. In order that my readers may judge of this for themselves, the specimens selected from this series have all been placed together on one large sheet for easy comparison. The full analysis of the Della Robbia work, and of specimens by other fifteenth century sculptors, would be too long, I fear, for insertion in so modest an opuscule as the present. But any student who may think that the conclusions here given are based on insufficient evidence will be gladly shown a complete list of the Italian sculpture examined.

It only remains for me to thank Mr. Dibblee for many suggestions both in the text and the illustrations. Mr. Eric Maclagan, who does not agree with my general conclusions, has most kindly saved me from several mistakes in detail. But I should not wish to indicate that responsibility for any remaining errors is to be allotted to any one except myself. Nor do I rest my proof of authenticity upon one argument

alone. There are many facts and suggestions brought together in these pages for consideration. Here and there, I anticipate that one or another may be weakened by further criticism. But their cumulative force is both extraordinary and undeniable; and I have little doubt that they will be further strengthened as my researches are continued. Students will not need to be told that I have made use of most of the recognised authorities available to me; but I have not thought it necessary, in a preliminary study of this kind, to trouble the general reader (for whom I chiefly write) with a multitude of references, footnotes, or acknowledgments. I desire here only to express my general obligation to all my predecessors in the history of Leonardo's works. I am again most grateful to Mr. George A. Bolton for making my index.

The carving which is the subject of this Essay, hitherto known as the '*Signa* Madonna,' should now be given a more appropriate title. For the present I think the name of her first owner, for whose villa at Sant' Ilario Leonardo made her, is the best substitute possible, and I have therefore entitled her in these pages, the '*Albizzi* Madonna,' which will at least serve for purposes of immediate reference until my visit to Italy later on, and will probably remain her permanent designation.

THEODORE ANDREA COOK.

March, 1923.

THE ALBIZZI MADONNA.
BY LEONARDO DA VINCI.
1478.

INTRODUCTORY.

ADOLFO VENTURI'S ARTICLE.—From 'L'Arte' for July–August,* 1922 *(twenty-fifth year, fourth volume, pages* 131–133*), which is illustrated with a view of the Group from the front.*†

'THE attribution to Leonardo‡ of that typical example of *gesso duro*, the Madonna group which was [*at first*] given the name of *Signa* from the region of its origin, seems now to rest upon the very best foundations. As Sir Theodore Cook has rightly recorded,§ a whole series of similar groups, in stucco, terra-cotta, and marble,‖ can be shown to have been

* The Italian is very difficult to translate literally in a way which would render to English readers the exact meaning that was in Venturi's mind. The original, therefore, has been printed with this version, which is exact, but has not invariably followed the precise order of the Italian phrases.

† Venturi adds a footnote as follows:—'We regret our inability to publish the reproduction of this *group in profile* which is shown in Figure C [in the first edition] of Sir Theodore Cook's pamphlet [frontispiece in this book]. In this view the proof of Leonardo's handiwork is much more manifest.' Venturi's words are 'gruppo *marmoreo* in iscorcio.' The word underlined is, of course, a slip of the pen. Venturi was well aware that both profile and full-face views reproduced in the pamphlet represented the same stone carving covered with gesso, as he describes it here, and again in a later passage: '*pietra coperta di malleabile gesso.*' The front view is Fig. L in the 'Table of Comparisons' with Chapter III.

‡ Venturi's footnote is as follows:—'Theodore A. Cook. *The Signa Madonna: an Essay in Comparisons.* December, 1919. Printed by the Field Press, Ltd., Windsor House, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C. 4. For Private Circulation only.' The original title of this carving will be no longer used.

§ See also the Catalogue to the Burlington Fine Arts Club Italian Sculpture Exhibition, 1912, No. 32.

‖ And also a few paintings in which the same composition of this group occurs.

inspired by this very choice specimen [from Signa], which is carved in stone with a covering of plaster of Paris; whereas the well-known terra-cotta relief by Verrocchio, formerly in S. Maria Nuova and now in the Museo Nazionale in Florence, must no longer be taken as the original of all these copies. But neither the relief by Leonardo's master nor any of the later compositions inspired by the beautiful Madonna discovered in 1897 by Mr. G. B. Dibblee, in Italy, can be compared for a moment in style or handiwork with the [Signa] group, which is a unique phenomenon in the marvellous realm of Florentine sculpture.

'Those dreams of Leonardo the painter, those visions of vague atmosphere, of tenuous shadow that breaks up the compactness of the forms, are all realised in this carving of the Madonna and Child, which preserves the same charm of youthful work that may be seen, for instance, in his *Madonna del Fiore*. The roundness of the face, the convex shape of the broad forehead, the downcast delicacy of those soft eyelids, also recall the style of the Master's early period.

'In the other similar reliefs — inspired by the [Signa] Madonna and therefore of a later date — the hands retain the sinewy, subtly precise modelling of the Florentine Quattrocentisti; and the folds of their drapery show the polyhedral form peculiar to rigid and stiffly woven material, or regular lines traced one above the other, all perfectly aligned and drawn in sinuous curves as though they were finely wrought in flexible steel. Now, observe the contrast to all this in the [Signa] Madonna: her soft hands are delicately rounded, with an almost tremulous appearance, as if they

were indefinite in outline; the folds of her cloak fall with that infinite *morbidezza* which is peculiar to Leonardo's draperies; the curled ringlets of her hair are gently entangled in the twisted veil, the ends of which float airily above the shoulder of the Virgin, with the same lightness that in his paintings Leonardo so much loved when he let loose the tresses of his model for the breeze to play with. Finally, most typical of Leonardo is the restrained smile which curves the Virgin's sensitive lips and seems to impart a well-nigh imperceptible tremor to her eyelids and to all her features.

'The Virgin smiles as she looks down on her Son; but the Child Himself is serious enough, with His soft baby's body that cannot stand alone and is not yet fully formed; the large head is covered with a thin veil of hair; the features are broadly and yet softly treated and are still somewhat indefinite; but the mouth is exquisitely tender with its full upper lip gently raised—the mouth of a baby at the breast, of the same lovely child as later shall be worshipped by Leonardo's Madonna of the Rocks. Beneath the ample curve of the forehead the eyes look out with a wide and pensive gaze to which the gesso-work has given that vagueness of the Divine which is so characteristic of all Leonardo's work.

'The pictorial effect is the main interest of the artist, and his flowing gradation of hollows and reliefs creates a delicately blended and harmonious alternation of light and shade, the true *sfumato* of sculpture. The very singularity of the method and material discloses the effort of the artist to discover a medium appropriate to the vision he created; for he has worked on a stone that has been covered with a layer of

malleable plaster on which slight traces of polychromy are still visible.

'For all these reasons this group seems to me to be indisputably the work, and, as far as we know to-day, the only work in sculpture we possess, of Leonardo.

'Adolfo Venturi.'

The original Italian is as follows:—

'Di ottimo fondamento ci sembra invece l'attribuzione a Leonardo della Madonna nota sotto il nome di Signa (fig. 3), il paese d'origine di questo tipo di plastiche in "gesso duro."* Tutto un gruppo di stucchi, terrecotte, marmi, come giustamente ha notato Theodore A. Cook,† risale a questo rarissimo esemplare, scolpito in pietra e rivestito di gesso, invece che al noto rilievo del Verrocchio, già in Santa Maria Nuova, ora al Museo Nazionale di Firenze. Ma nè il rilievo del maestro di Leonardo, nè alcuno degli altri che derivano dalla preziosa Madonna rintracciata da Mr. G. B. Dibblee in Italia nel 1897, offre riscontri di stile con essa, esempio isolato nel meraviglioso mondo della plastica fiorentina.

'I leonardeschi sogni di nebulose atmosfere, di ombre tenui sgretolanti la compattezza della forma, trovano attuazione in questo gruppo di Madonna e Bambino, che ha ancora l'incanto delle opere giovanili, della "Madonna del Fiore" ad esempio. La rotondità del volto, la convessità dell' ampia

* Theodore A. Cook.—'The Signa Madonna,' an Essay in Comparisons; December 1919, printed by the Field Press, Ltd., Windsor House, Bream's Buildings, London, E.C. 4. (For private circulation only.)

† Siamo dolenti di non poter presentare la riproduzione del gruppo marmoreo in iscorcio, quale si vede nella tavola C. dell' opuscolo di Teodoro Cook. Da essa risulta molto piu evidente la mano di Leonardo.

fronte, il peso delle palpebre morbide, ci richiamano le opere di quel periodo primitivo del Maestro. Le mani, in tutti gli altri simili rilievi, derivati dalla Madonna di Signa, e dunque più tardi, conservano il nervoso, sottile, preciso modellato dei quattrocentisti fiorentini, e le pieghe si fanno di forma poliedrica, proprie di tessuto rigido e resistente, o calligrafiche, tracciate l'una sopra l'altra, tese e affilate nei loro archeggiamenti, o placcate, a meandri, sulle forme, come se fossero di sottile lamina duttile.

'Invece, nella Madonna Signa, le mani sono carnose, soffici, senza peso, ondulate nei movimenti, indefinite nei contorni; le pieghe del manto ricadono con l'infinita morbidezza propria alle stoffe di Leonardo; le ciocche increspate della chioma mollemente s'intrecciano col velo attorcigliato, il cui lembo si dibatte all' aria sopra una spalla della Vergine, con la stessa levità dei capelli che Leonardo pittore ama sciogliere in fili dalle acconciature perchè vi scherzi il vento. Infine, tipico di Leonardo è il contenuto sorriso, che inarca le sensitive labbra della Vergine, e sembra comunicare un impercettibile tremito alle palpebre, a tutti i lineamenti.

'La Vergine sorride, guardando dall' alto al figlio; grave è invece il fanciullo, con il corpo infantile molle ricadente, non ancora formato, la grossa testa sfiorata da un tenue velo di capelli, i larghi e morbidi lineamenti, ancor indefiniti anch' essi, la bocca tenerissima, col labbro superiore sporto e carnoso nei suoi morbidi archi, bocca di poppante, come quella che avrà più tardi il bellissimo putto adorato dalla Madonna delle Rocce. E sotto l'ampia convessità della fronte s'aprono larghi pensosi gli occhi, che nel gesso prendono la divina nebulosità di sguardo propria ai disegni leonardiani.

'L'effetto pittorico è cura massima dell' artista, che da una successione quasi fluida di cavi e di rilievi crea una vicenda armoniosa e morbida di ombre e di luci, lo *sfumato* nella scultura. Per tutte queste ragioni, il plastico gruppo, che anche per la singolarità del materiale rivela nell' artista la ricerca di uno strumento adatto alle proprie visioni—pietra coperta di malleabile gesso, su cui ancora s'indovinano tracce lievi di cromia—ci sembra opera indiscutibile, e per quanto si conosce ai tempi nostri, unica, di Leonardo nel campo dell' arte plastica.

'Adolfo Venturi.'

LEONARDO DA VINCI, SCULPTOR.

CHAPTER I.

The Significance of the Albizzi Carving.

THE lovely bas-relief shown in the frontispiece, and in Fig. L of the 'Table of Comparisons' (page 24), should now be known as the Albizzi Madonna, from the name of the famous Italian family, in whose villa at Sant' Ilario, just outside Florence, it remained for many years heavily covered with whitewash.

The house had been bought, two generations ago, by Pasquale Orsi from the noble family of the Federighi. The facts about it are recorded from a document in the hand of Signore Carlo Orsi, who sold it to Mr. G. B. Dibblee, Bursar of All Souls. The arms of the Federighi can be seen in the courtyard, and a famous monument to their memory is in the Trinità. The house was built for the well-known Florentine family of Albizzi soon after 1470. The concentric circles of their coat of arms are still upon the part of the house completed by that date.

From its fresh new rooms went out to her wedding that Giovanna d'Albizzi who was immortalised by Ghirlandaio among the Florentines who fill his fresco of the meeting of

Mary and Elisabeth, in S. Maria Novella. This was painted about 1486, and her face is easily recognisable from the well-known medal which commemorates her marriage with Lorenzo Tornabuoni. It is a pleasant hypothesis that her mother had bought, and set in the wall within sight of the window of her maiden bedchamber, this exquisite example of a Madonna and Child from the famous and fashionable *bottega* of Verrocchio; and it may be remembered that Francesco di Simone carved, under the inspiring tutorship of Verrocchio, his master, the relief in the Bargello, like a Roman sarcophagus, which represents the death of Francesca Tornabuoni.

It is the purpose of these pages to indicate the position which this almost unknown bas-relief from Sant' Ilario holds among a comparatively celebrated series of somewhat similar but inferior works undoubtedly derived from it, and to give reasons for the attribution of the design to the most famous of all Verrocchio's pupils, to the Leonardo among whose friends were the Albizzi family.

The carving was bought from the last of the Orsi family by Mr. G. B. Dibblee, by private treaty, in Italy, in the autumn of 1897, and therefore can show a direct and clear descent from 1478 to the present day. In my belief, as in Signor Venturi's, it is the only piece of Leonardo's sculpture which we know to have survived: and it therefore has a clearer pedigree, and has remained longer in the place for which he made it, than any other of his works except 'The Last Supper.'

Owing to the local conditions it had never received much notice in Italy. But it attracted immediate attention as soon as it became visible to connoisseurs in this country,

though it has only once been exhibited in London, at the Burlington Fine Arts Club in 1912. The catalogue then gave the description quoted in my Preface. Of that description it need only be said at present that the broken right hand, as I shall show, was not raised in the act of blessing, but held a little bird. This detail can be seen in my 'Table of Comparisons' in the Della Robbia numbered B, which is certainly a careful copy of the carving numbered L in the same series. The profile photograph of the Albizzi group in my Frontispiece shows that the Child's right hand was never fully outstretched in the act of Blessing; for, though it boldly breaks the surface of the relief, it is clasping something against his breast, and there is enough of the broken stone left in the original to indicate the feathers of a bird.

The lower part of the carving can be equally certainly re-constituted from the lower part of the Birmingham Terra Cotta which is Fig. C in the same Table. From this latter we know the shape of the cushion, with its curves and tassels, on which the Child stood, and all the details of the bottom line of the design which is almost worn away in Leonardo's work. There are also many similarities in this part of the drapery (though the top half of the design is very poorly copied) which are very extraordinary and exact, and will be mentioned later on. They prove that the artist of the Birmingham group copied Leonardo and not Verrocchio.

In the Leonardo carving, in 1897, part of the stone slab at the top right-hand corner was broken off, but without harming any portion of the design, and has been easily restored. Nothing else has been done to the carving by Mr. Dibblee, its present owner (February, 1923), and the white-

wash which originally covered the gesso on the surface had all been removed before he purchased it.

The relief is not in stucco, but is carved in stone and covered with a thin surface of *gesso duro*, a kind of plaster made of gypsum, somewhat similar to plaster of Paris. This curious combination of materials, which has been used in the art of India and China, will be found to have a certain significance. It does not occur in any other of the groups here reproduced, and I know no other example in which the two materials are similarly used, so that the more delicate surface-details are finished off in gesso, and not in stone.

When we come to compare the details of this design with those of others of the same character, its most striking feature (apart from the change in the position of the Child from that of Verrocchio's design) is instantly recognised to be the fact that the Child has a halo but the Mother has not. In all the other designs here illustrated there are either two haloes or none. The question is more fully discussed on page 91 ; and I do not assert that no other artist has ever made the same choice. But the use of the halo in this group for the Child alone is, as we shall see, both deliberate and characteristic of Leonardo. If a similar halo to that above the Child's head had been desired over the Mother's, we could not have failed to see its traces ; its omission is due neither to the fracture of the stone nor to the damage done to the outer surface by rain and weather, a damage which is remarkably slight and will be noticed in its right place later on.

CHAPTER II.

A Note on Methods and Materials.

THOUGH the material of Leonardo's Madonna is, so far as is known, unique in European art in that about one-sixteenth of an inch of gesso (or less) covers the stone it must not be thought that such reliefs by other masters were always limited to marble, stucco, or terra-cotta. There is a relief in dark stone by Desiderio da Settignano (1428-1464) in the Victoria and Albert Museum (Room 62, No. 7582, 1861) which is very like the Leonardo group, except that (being done before 1478) it shows the Child sitting on his Mother's left. Besides Donatello's famous 'Annunciation' (in *pietra serena*) in Santa Croce, there are of course several other examples by lesser artists in Florence. The painted stucco, of which the Berlin Museum is so full, needs no comment here. But in the Ashmolean Museum at Oxford, where Leonardo's Madonna once rested, the Fortnum Madonna deserves special notice; for it is in gesso coloured to imitate bronze. It was bought in Florence in 1859.

To the *Burlington Magazine* for September, 1921, Mr. Eric Maclagan contributed a very interesting note which bears on the questions we are now studying. Early in 1920 the Victoria and Albert Museum acquired from the collection of Mr. Engel-Gros (who bought it from Signor Bardini in Florence) a stucco relief very like the marble 'Scipio' in the Louvre and probably taken from the same 'original,' namely

Verrocchio's bronze relief of 'Alexander' mentioned by Vasari as made for Lorenzo de Medici. Verrocchio's campanion relief of 'Darius' was copied by the Della Robbia workshop, as may be seen from the example now in the Kaiser Friedrich Museum in Berlin. Mr. Maclagan suggests that Leonardo took this same Verrocchio relief, and improved it, when he drew the magnificent 'Head of a Warrior' in silver point, now in the Malcolm Collection in the British Museum. I think that very much the same process took place when Leonardo improved Verrocchio's group into the Madonna of this Essay, whereupon both his improvement and the 'original' design were also copied by the Della Robbias.

Sir Charles Holmes (in the same number of the *Burlington*) has emphasised his opinion that Leonardo was always more preoccupied with form than with colour, by photographing (and enlarging) the left forearm of the infant Christ in the 'Madonna of the Rocks' of our National Gallery. The finger-prints left by the artist show that he had softened and modelled the wet paint with his fingers, thus applying the methods of the sculptor to his painting in a way very characteristic of his unwearied search for new experiments; and if we wish to see the reverse process, the translation at the beginning of this Essay will have shown how much of the methods of painting Venturi has recognised in the sculpture of Leonardo's group. The enlarged photographs of the Madonna's profile, which I have reproduced, will show that these methods appear in almost every part of the relief; and Mr. John Tweed has pointed out a very significant detail in the original which would have escaped the eye of any one but a fellow-craftsman. On the Madonna's left shoulder a

triangular fold of drapery will be noticed. Instead of lying flat, or equally rounded on the point of the shoulder as might have been expected, the top of this fold stands up as if exactly copying some stiffened material that had been lightly pinched together by a thumb and finger. The detail cannot be traced in the photographs here reproduced, but it is a singular corroboration of the well-known story that Leonardo, in his youth, had studied the effect of dipping material into some stiffening substance and then drawing the folds which were thus, as it were, perpetuated in the lines in which he had originally arranged them.

No one can look at the 'Virgin of the Rocks' or the 'Saint Anne' without realising that Leonardo, in these works, practised most beautifully this department of his art. His studies of drapery preserved at Windsor and in the Louvre are among the finest of their kind in the world. They were the masterpieces of a later period than that which especially concerns us, and his later views on the subject, expressed some time after he had gone to Milan, are recorded in his own words translated by Mr. McCurdy from MS. 2038 (Bibliothèque Nationale, Paris) 17.v. 'If you wish to represent woollen cloth, draw the folds from the same material, and if it is to be silk, or fine cloth, or homespun, or linen, or crape, show the different nature of the folds in each; and do not make a costume as many make it from models covered with pieces of paper or thin leather, for you will be deceiving yourself greatly.'

But while he was in Verrocchio's studio, Leonardo's methods were such as we should expect before 1481; and concerning them Vasari's words are:—'Leonardo was very diligent in drawing from nature and sometimes in making

models of clay figures. Upon these he arranged wet cloths dipped in plaster, and then patiently drew them on very fine canvas made of crape, or old linen, and did them in black and white with the point of his brush in a miraculous way, which can be confirmed by some of his that I have in my sketch-book.' The quotation applies, I think it will be agreed, just to those experimental days of Leonardo's youth which relate to our carving and its draperies.

Those draperies were at all events warmly admired by one of the imitators of Leonardo's group, and I have reproduced the lower half of his carving for comparison with the lower half of the terra-cotta in the Birmingham Museum (Fig. C in my table). The lesser artist has copied Leonardo's lines with an almost slavish precision as long as his notes lasted, evidently without realising the true reason for their shape or presence; even to the horizontal slash, as if made with a palette-knife in putty, which is very visible in the original just above the Madonna's left elbow and across towards her girdle. The two carvings must be looked at closely in my reproductions; it is needless here to describe further their detailed similarities.

Let me add here that Leonardo's carving is, without any question whatever, a heavy paving-stone covered with a layer of gesso of a quarter of an inch at most, and sometimes as thin as one-forty-eighth of an inch. The abrasions due to weather and the break at the top right-hand corner of the stone would alone have contributed sufficient evidence of this. The stucco so often found in works of this kind can easily be moulded in high relief and applied to any flat heavy surface, But gesso is a solution of gypsum and must have been applied by

LEONARDO'S DRAPERY IN THE ALBIZZI MADONNA.

COPY OF LEONARDO'S DRAPERY BY THE SCULPTOR OF THE BIRMINGHAM RELIEF SHOWN IN THE TABLE OF COMPARISON FIG. C.

Leonardo in a thin wash on a surface almost completely carved beforehand. It had the consistency of a fine tooth-paste when mixed with water. The result of expert examination of the Signa stone is now so conclusive that the question need never be reopened.

The only carving I have been able to examine which appeared exactly like Leonardo's group in colour and texture, and was treated by the similar method of a thin layer of gesso over carved stone, is a very beautiful Chinese head of the Wei Dynasty about the fifth century A.D., representing a poet or philosopher, now in the collection of Mr. Archibald Russell, in London. This indicates that stone, when it was to be coloured (a frequent process), often had to be covered with gesso first, to give a surface for the paint. But this is not what I see in the Albizzi group. Nor do I see such mere saving of expense or trouble as the gesso carving of chain-mail laid over the stone in the fourteenth century effigy from Lesnes of which Mr. Maclagan reminds me in the South Kensington Museum. Leonardo's method is different from both.

'The sculptor,' writes Leonardo in the MS. 2038 Bib: Nat: 'if he is working in clay or wax, can either take away from it or add to it.' I have unfortunately to-day no opportunity of examining the manuscript in Paris from which Mr. McCurdy translated the words 'clay or wax' (Duckworth, 1906, p. 161, and compare p. 41). But the scholar will find full details in the critical edition of the Vatican manuscript of the *Treatise on Painting* (Cod: Vat.: Urbinas 1270) published in Stuttgart by H. Ludwig in 1885.

I have no desire to strain too far the meaning of the original

words and to suggest that they may include the gesso used in the Albizzi carving; but I do wish very strongly to emphasise the curious resentment Leonardo evidently feels against the intractability of his material in sculpture as compared with the various possibilities of painting. Even in painting, as we know, he was continuously trying experiments. Is it not even more likely that he would experiment in sculpture, and in that form of bas-relief which may be said to combine the possibilities of carving and of painting in its treatment and its light and shade? Is it not credible that after carving his paving-stone he found it impossible to produce the delicacy of detail he desired, and therefore covered its surface with a layer of gesso, the technical effect of which, in the treatment of the head-dress, may be examined in my frontispiece?

It is, therefore, not without a due consciousness of responsibility that I shall lay stress upon Vasari's famous sentence about the terra-cotta 'heads of women smiling,' and that I direct attention to the original Italian of the passage: '. . . teste di femmine che ridone *che vanno formate per l'arte di gesso*, e parimente teste di putti. . . .' As I look again at the words italicised, with Leonardo's Madonna before me, my thoughts turn rather to workmanship than to the subject chosen, and the words 'che vanno formate per l'arte di gesso' seem to bear the meaning 'were modelled in' or 'received a surface of' gesso; they may even represent Vasari's effort to convey 'the surface-modelling of which was done in gesso'; and, if this be correct, we have an absolutely accurate description of Leonardo's group, which was carved out of an ordinary paving-stone with a thin layer of superimposed gesso to give delicacy to the surface-modelling. If Vasari did not know—and it is scarcely likely

that he knew—the composite material of this actual carving, it would only make his reference to Leonardo's technical experiment (which might well have been described to him) yet more convincing for our present purpose.

The little detail of the pinched fold upon the Madonna's shoulder makes me long for the possibility of some such proof of authenticity as is suggested in Sir Charles Holmes's photograph of finger-prints from 'The Madonna of the Rocks,' or in the photographic enlargements of brushwork by which Professor A. P. Laurie conclusively showed (January, 1922), that the painting of 'The Good Samaritan,' in the Wallace Collection, was by the same hand that gave us Rembrandt's 'Woman taken in Adultery,' in the National Gallery. I suppose even the most elaborately careful sculptor could never find in Leonardo's carving any traces of left-handed workmanship comparable with the shading from left to right which usually distinguishes this left-handed artist's sketches; and certainly the position of the Child is due to no such accidental physical peculiarity. I am, in fact, only too conscious that this carving can as yet be compared with no other example of Leonardo's sculpture in the world. Yet, though it stands alone, it shall no longer stand unrecognised. Its evidences of authenticity shine out from all those internal details of workmanship and of conception which Venturi has so eloquently described. I can but corroborate them with such fragments of technical or historic testimony as may remain. But every fragment has helped to build up my proof, and there are many more to come.

CHAPTER III.

The Key Series, with a Table of Comparisons.

'THIS,' wrote the author of the catalogue for the Burlington Fine Arts Club, concerning the Albizzi carving, 'is perhaps the best example of a number of reliefs executed in the workshop of Verrocchio and derived from a common source.' The curious thing about this 'derivation' has hitherto been that none of the subsequent reliefs placed the Child on the left side of his Mother, as Verrocchio (the 'common source') had placed him. All copies later than 1478 (with very few exceptions) show the Child on his Mother's right. The discovery of Leonardo's Madonna has at last explained this anomaly. Nearly every one who saw her copied her instead of the Verrocchio group. I desire here to prove that the Albizzi Madonna has been copied, more or less faithfully, by many artists, in various mediums (but never in the curious mixture of stone and gesso seen in Leonardo's work); and that it not only contains more of the points in which the others resemble each other than any individual of the whole series, but is itself the undoubted work of Leonardo da Vinci. The two problems are better discussed in this order, for the mere comparison of this design with others, its contemporaries or followers, will lead us inevitably to the conclusion that it is the finest of them all, and will therefore naturally involve a closer analysis of that superiority, and finally a recognition of the master's handiwork.

TABLE OF COMPARISONS.

V Terra-cotta Group, by Verrocchio (about 1475), for S. Maria Nuova. Now in the Bargello.

L Madonna, by Leonardo da Vinci (1478).

A Della Robbia work in Santa Croce, Florence.

B Della Robbia work in the Pinacoteca, Prato.

C Terra-cotta in the Birmingham Museum.

D Stucco in the Rijks Museum, Amsterdam; compare Figure **R**.

E Della Robbia work from Florence, now in the Jacques Seligman Collection, New York. Sketched by Jacomb Hood. See the photograph in Marquand (Giovanni), Figure 73.

F Della Robbia work from the Lady Wantage Collection, Berkshire probably replica of Figure **E**.

G Coloured Stucco from Berlin.

H Marble in the Museo Nazionale (No. 180), Florence, possibly by Francesco di Simone.

K Terra-cotta (No. 7576–1861) in Room 62 of the Victoria and Albert Museum, South Kensington.

R Marble from Poggio Imperiale, now in the Museo Nazionale. Compare Figure **D**, and for a similar (earlier) work, by Rossellino, see No. 108 in Room 62 of the Victoria and Albert Museum.

If that recognition were easily to be enforced by plausible argument, I should attach but little value to a proof which cannot yet adduce any direct documentary evidence. The forbidding example of Dr. von Bode and the Lucas Bust—nay, the very plentiful lack of accurate data for any of Leonardo's sculpture before he left Florence for Milan—will be sufficient warning to the enthusiast. And it will of course be remembered that I am here endeavouring to explore what is entirely new ground in modern criticism, ground that has hitherto yielded not one single tangible and visible proof of what Leonardo could actually achieve in the sculpture which he most certainly accomplished. But there are various hints, not hitherto fully appreciated perhaps, in that still undiscovered continent of Leonardo's manuscripts, and there are various external and objective facts and dates bearing on this question which, in conjunction with such subjective opinions as are based on style and sentiment, lead us quite irresistibly to the conclusion which will alone explain the phenomena satisfactorily as a whole. I begin, then, with the 'series' mentioned in the Catalogue just quoted, and illustrated by the 'Table of Comparisons' bound up with this chapter.

By printing on one sheet all the photographs of the eleven groups to be compared with the Albizzi carving, I hope to enable my reader to study them more carefully than if each was on a separate page, and thus to arrive at his own conclusions, a process which it is my desire to facilitate throughout this essay.

Fig. V I have placed first as being probably the oldest, and hitherto considered as the type or 'common source' of the series. It is a terra-cotta from Santa Maria Nuova in Florence,

and is accepted as the work of Andrea Verrocchio. In comparing it with my frontispiece (in profile) or with Fig. L of the table (full face), the main difference instantly observable is that the Child is on his Mother's left and supported by the curve of her left arm, while her right hand holds up his right elbow, and his right hand is somewhat half-heartedly raised in the gesture of blessing. His left arm is rigidly bent, and the idle hand rests on his Mother's drapery. Neither figure is surmounted by a visible halo, and the dove of the Holy Ghost above them has been added (like the background and the oval top) at a later and less tasteful period. The Virgin's head is turned to her left, towards her Son, who stands naked upon a little cushion placed on the parapet from behind which his Mother's figure rises, though its lines are obscured by her drapery, which falls in somewhat angular and unnatural folds, characteristic of Verrocchio. Her head-dress and her brooch should be carefully noted.

There does not seem to be much dignity in either of these figures. They are naturalistic copies (with little religious or dogmatic feeling) of the rather middle-class models selected by the sculptor, whose real skill is only observable in the Madonna's hand, a worthy companion to the 'Lady with the lovely hands,' in the Bargello, by the same master. In other ways, this group reveals nothing either of the tenderness and sentiment of his St. Thomas, or of the boldness and strength of his Colleone. The group looks like a school work, done for a special demand, by the pupils of an artist who could do far finer work when he liked. It was modelled between 1475 and 1477, and has now been removed from the Museum of the Hospital of Santa Maria Nuova to the Bargello.

I shall examine the details of the Albizzi Madonna (Fig. L) with greater attention later on. For the present, it is only necessary to emphasise the immediate improvement in the whole composition by the change of the Child from his Mother's left side to her right, though it is noticeable that the index finger of her right hand remains in support of his little elbow, but the rest of the hand is in tender contact with his body. This change of position in the Child dominates the whole of the series following. It was at once recognised as an improvement, and at once accepted as a masterly rendering of the group. Restricting myself, for the present, to that one observation, I pass on to the next design.

Granted the inevitable differences in material and handiwork, it would be difficult to find a much closer copy of Fig. L than is shown in Fig. A, the group in Della Robbia work from Santa Croce in Florence. The similarities of detail need no emphasis on my part; but they will be easily intelligible when we recall a few dates. Leonardo was certainly in Verrocchio's studio in 1469, when he was seventeen, and only three years later his name was inscribed in the Red Book of the Guild or Company of Painters of Florence. Of the Sculptors' Guild, Luca, eldest of the Robbias, was the head. His *bottega*, under his nephew Andrea, rivalled Verrocchio's in popularity, and Leonardo mentions the Robbia technique in the thirty-seventh chapter of his 'Trattato della Pittura.' Giovanni della Robbia carried on the family tradition of reproducing Madonnas and other compositions of Verrocchio's school, in which both he himself and Benedetto Buglioni (another artist in Robbia work) had been pupils, as had Nanni Grosso (as Vasari tells us) and

other sculptors. I shall have to speak of the Della Robbias in greater detail later on. In the group here illustrated we observe that there is a halo above each head; but there is nothing in the Child's right hand, and it is not raised in blessing as Verrocchio's was.

The next copy, which I have lettered B, gives the missing detail in the broken hand of the Albizzi infant. It is a bird. There is no essential difference from the Leonardo type which need detain us. The two haloes are a necessary Della Robbia convention. The flowers and cherubim on each side are the additions a lesser artist would think necessary in spaces which the earlier master has rightly left to our imagination to fill up. All through the inferior workmanship the inspiration of the great original is abundantly clear. The chief value of the group lies in its unequivocal suggestion that a bird was once held in the now vanished hand of Leonardo's Child.

In the somewhat clumsy uncoloured terra-cotta of the Birmingham Museum (Fig. C) the right hand of the Child remains empty and meaningless as we saw it in Fig. A; and Fig. C is probably a contemporary copy of Fig. V by a less skilful hand. It is noticeable that the brooch, retained in the Santa Croce example from Leonardo's pattern, is now altered to an entirely unsuitable and inappropriate ornament. The delicate lines in the Child's legs are here decidedly over-emphasised. In the Virgin, the modelling of the face and neck, and particularly of the right hand, is sufficiently noticeable to remove the whole work from any possibility of first-rate execution; but it is a careful copy of the lower part of Leonardo's drapery.

Fig. D was very kindly brought to my notice by the

Director of the Rijks Museum in Amsterdam. It was bought by his predecessor from Mauer in Florence in 1906, and is an old stucco replica of the Bargello marble shown in Fig. R. Its background has been supplemented with plaster, and it measures 60 by 44½ centimetres. Its date is after 1478. Leonardo's apple is repeated, and the right hand (which might have been clasped round a bird) is empty.

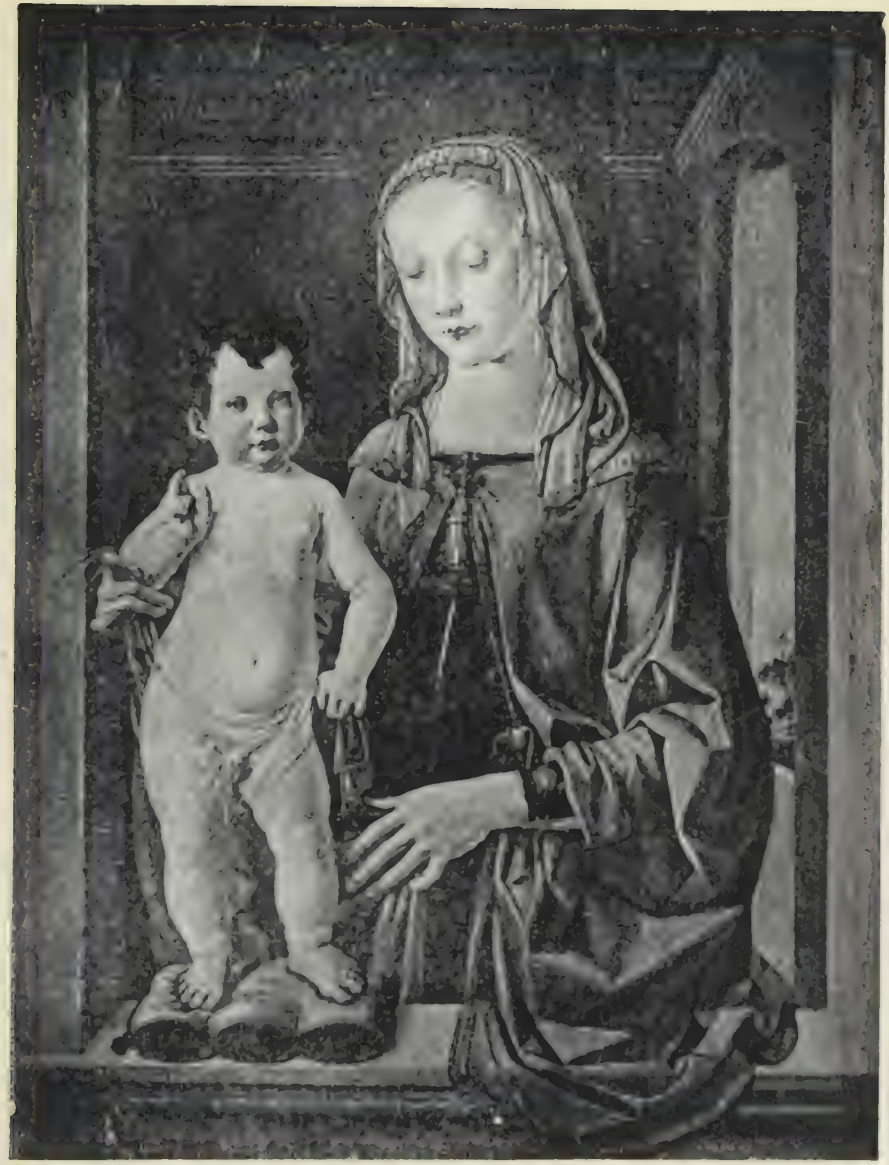
In Figs. E and F I have added two groups to indicate that it is not invariably possible to date a carving in this series by the position of the Child. No such hard-and-fast rule could possibly be suggested by any one conscious of the accidents of creativeness or the idiosyncrasies of artists. But I shall justify my argument later on by proving that the proportion of copies made after 1478 which follow Leonardo, instead of Verrocchio, is strikingly high. Both E and F show Leonardo's modifications in the Verrocchio design. Fig. E was drawn for me by Mr. Jacomb Hood from the group now in the Jacques Seligman collection, in New York, formerly in the Volpi Galleries in Florence, and at Agnew's in London. It was made by the Della Robbia workshop for the Carmelite Church at Castellino, between 1500 and 1506, in a frame with cherubs and garlands. Leonardo's bird is here. But the Child, as in Verrocchio's group, stands on his Mother's left, raising his right hand in blessing. Her right hand is on his right knee; her left, on his left hip. Fig. F is an evident replica from the same workshop as Fig. E, and of about the same date. It is in the Lady Wantage collection at Lockinge House, Berkshire.

The coloured stucco from Berlin (Fig. G) has been attributed to Verrocchio without, as I think, sufficient reason.

Apart from the obvious change in the position of the Child from Fig. V, this stucco has altered the brooch to the unsuitable pattern shown in the Birmingham design (C), and added the Della Robbia cherubim of B without taking the fascinating little bird in one of the Child's hands or the apple in the other. His cushion and his attitude of blessing are the same as Verrocchio's, but his hair is lamentably inferior, as is the right hand of the Mother, whose face betrays neither life nor interest in the presence of her Son. This Berlin stucco, however, quite perceptibly reveals the peculiarly characteristic head of Leonardo's Christ-child, slightly crooked, which is a marked feature of A, B, and C. The straight and doll-like face in the Verrocchio group is clearly visible in H, K, and R.

Curiously enough it is another German example (reproduced in my text from the *Art Journal* for January, 1912, page 11) which gives the almost exact counterpart, in a painting in the Staedel Museum at Frankfort, of the coloured stucco in Berlin. The face of this painting has the same lifeless droop with closing eyes. The attitude of each of the four hands is precisely similar. The head-dress, the brooch, and the drapery are different, though more akin to the Verrocchio type than to any of the others. The face of the Child is adolescent, like Verrocchio's, and there is some useless and transparent drapery round him, which is generally the mark of a commission given by a monastery.

By the Director of the Museo Nazionale in Florence the marble bas-relief shown in Fig. H has been attributed to Verrocchio. I cannot for a moment accept it as good enough,



PAINTING OF THE SCHOOL OF VERRÓCCHIO (AFTER 1478)
IN THE STAEDEL MUSEUM, FRANKFORT

even if we only judge it, in arrangement, by comparison with his terra-cotta from Santa Maria Nuova (Fig. V), or, in treatment of the marble and in modelling, with the lovely bust just mentioned by his hand in the Bargello. But we have further to observe that the change from left to right, only observable *after* Leonardo's group in other copies, is not likely to have occurred in Verrocchio's own earlier work. It is true that there are no aureoles; but the brooch is the brooch of Birmingham (Fig. C), the head-dress has infinitely more in common with Leonardo's pattern (see Fig. L) than with the known Verrocchio in Fig. V; and, finally, the Child, again without apple, bird, or blessing, is rendered in a style, whether copied from Verrocchio or another, which I can only describe as 'puttified.' A very similar criticism applies to the Madonna's head and face. So far from looking happy she seems already wearied of her task of exhibition. The smile has vanished; the exquisite mixture of deference and tender pride has gone. The group is probably by Francesco di Simone and has little value save to enhance (in our comparisons) the outstanding merit of the Albizzi carving.

The plain terra-cotta copy of the Leonardo Madonna shown in Fig. K is in the South Kensington Museum. It shows the same treatment of the Child's hands as that by Verrocchio in Fig. V, though the position is of course changed from left to right. But the Virgin's hands are quite differently disposed. Both have the haloes of the Della Robbia copies (Fig. B), but the brooch is a dull variation of the type seen in the Birmingham group (Fig. C), and, finally, the Madonna is sitting in a carved chair, while her Son, without either apple or bird, stands on her right knee. There is a

certain nobility about the modelling of the heads, but the drapery seems to me entirely unworthy of them.

Much the same may be said of the marble relief (Fig. R) ascribed by Marcel Reymond to Antonio Rossellino, who died at the age of fifty-one in 1478. It is true that it shows close affinities with the group which Leonardo carved in that year, in the apple, and in the fillet floating over the Virgin's left shoulder. But the style is of a later date and the workmanship is much inferior, especially in the hands, and not good enough, in my opinion, for Rossellino, whose work in a similar subject may be studied in the marble No. 108—1878 in Room 62 of the Victoria and Albert Museum. In this, the Child is also on his Mother's right, but sits upon her knee, without the halo which she wears. I think Mackowsky is more probably right in attributing Fig. R to Verrocchio's pupil, Francesco di Simone, who died in 1493 at the age of fifty-six. This may be the relief (mentioned in the Burlington Exhibition Catalogue) from Poggio Imperiale, and was copied in Fig. D; but I only give it here as a reminder that my 'Series' is by no means exhaustive. The lunette, for instance, at Bolsena (Marquand, Benedetto and Santo Buglioni, Fig. 39) is as close to the Leonardo group as any. But no more examples are, I think, necessary to convince the candid critic of the superiority of Leonardo's group to those of all his successors. I agree with Dr. Thiis that the more critically the chaff is winnowed from the grain the greater shines out the splendour of those few certainties that we can trace without fear to Leonardo's own handiwork. It is just because almost the only thing we know about his sculpture is the universal admiration excited by his lost Cavallo that

we should hesitate many times before ascribing to that overpowering genius anything unworthy of its best productions.

It is not essential, I think, to make a tedious catalogue of resemblances to the Albizzi carving, and differences from it, in order to demonstrate that all the best points of the series may be related to this original, while all divergences from it may be seen to predicate inferiority. A few such points are suggested in my brief analysis of each carving.

One example will be sufficient here: the treatment of the Child's hands. In Figs. V and K there is nothing in the left hand because the right is raised in blessing. In Fig. H neither hand has any significance whatever. I have suggested my conviction that Leonardo invented the bird in the Child's right hand (*cf.* Figs. L and B), and I would now point out that he also invented the position of the apple between his left hand and his Mother's thumb, a curious detail which does not occur in Verrocchio's work (*cf.* Figs. V and L). But after Leonardo had finished the group shown in Fig. L not only do we find the apple in carvings subsequently copied from his (*e.g.*, Figs. A, B, and C), but we see in these same copies the exact reproduction of the very strange position of the apple between the Child's left hand and the Mother's left thumb (*see* Fig. L). Note also that those examples (Figs. K and G) which copy Verrocchio (Fig. V) in having no apple, also copy the same artist in carving the right hand in the gesture of blessing. The relation of the hands in Fig. R remains much the same as in Fig. L; but the significance of the apple resting on the Mother's thumb seems to be missed, unless it has been wholly hidden in the Child's fingers, and his other clasping hand is empty.

Such details may only interest the student. The general reader has by this time, I trust, reached a far more valuable conclusion from his examination of this whole series. He has, perhaps, considered that Verrocchio's relief is hardly worthy of that great sculptor's usual dignity and beauty of conception. He has certainly realised that the remainder of the groups (subsequent to the Albizzi carving in date) are, with scarcely a single exception, school-work of various kinds supplied to meet a definite demand for what had become a fashionable composition. The Leonardo, on the other hand, is curiously different, both from such finished technique as we might demand from Verrocchio at his best, and from such uninspired copying as is but too visible in the second-rate productions of inferior workmen. The Albizzi carving, in fact, is precisely what we should have expected from the young and brilliant amateur of genius, which Leonardo was when it was made.

In one sense, he remained an 'amateur,' invariably experimenting, all his life, in every form of art and every department of science which he touched. In another sense, his work, even in the most youthful of his experimental days, contained qualities which the most accomplished 'professional' could never equal. Both of these aspects are visible in the Albizzi Madonna; neither of them can be predicated of the various groups I have compared with her. She is undoubtedly one of those works which founded the reputation of the young Florentine to whom the best commission of the period, the Cavallo at Milan, was awarded in 1482. His daring disregard of ordinary rules, his immaturities, his attempts at the impossible, provide subtle proofs of authenticity which are, in

their own way, as important in considering the product of his hands in 1478 as any of the evidences of genius or success which are so easily discoverable in it.

An argument often raised by those who are themselves engaged in the actual production of painting, or sculpture, is, that just and exact criticism of such work is impossible from one who does not himself paint, or carve, or model. Yet this should be no deterrent either to my readers or to those writers who, like myself, believe that a great work of art must, from the very fact of its achievement and its beauty, make an appeal that in the end is universal. I hold with Leonardo himself, who wrote: 'When a man is painting a picture he ought not to refuse to hear any man's opinion, for we know very well that though a man may not be a painter, he has a true conception of form . . .' and I am therefore content to believe that this creation of Leonardo's hand and brain is great enough not only to interest the craftsman who himself has faced a similar practical problem of production, but also to win its wider and worthier acknowledgment from every understanding heart and eye that can appreciate its loveliness.

Without any further philosophical discussion, which might easily lead us much too far afield, I will therefore face with confidence the very possible suggestion that the Albizzi Madonna is too 'conventional,' however good in itself, to be anything but one school-work out of many. That criticism, it seems to me, could only be made by one who has never realised the true implications of the 'Table of Comparisons' we have just been studying, for it suggests that the Albizzi group was made at the same time as A, B, C, and the

rest, and that like these it was a mere copy of Fig. V. But I think that, apart from all comparisons of excellence, our 'Table' has conclusively proved that Figs. A, B, C, &c., were not copied from Fig. V but from Fig. L; and a further study of Leonardo's work (such as that contained in Chapter VIII.) will leave no doubt in the mind of any impartial judge that anything more unconventional—within the limits of its subject and its purpose—than the Albizzi Madonna, could scarcely be imagined. I need not repeat the original motives, already sufficiently emphasised, of the bird, or the position of the apple, or especially the absence from the Mother of the divine halo given to the Child. I will only point to the whole spirit and conception of the group, as compared with anything of the kind before 1478, and I will suggest a closer analysis even than that which has been made in Chapter VII. of the technical peculiarities, both of the material used and of the actual handiwork of the carving. Could any second-rate conventional school-copyist have dreamt of either? One small point may, perhaps, be anticipated here from later pages more specially devoted to this portion of my subject.

Look closely at the face of Leonardo's Madonna in the 'Table of Comparisons' and you will observe a delicate foreshortening of the carving in the relative lines of the eyes and mouth. It is as clear as the slight inequality of the two sides of the Child's face. Is any conventional copyist—I ask again—likely to have attempted either? Is it not obviously the work of the writer of that manuscript (MS. 2038 Bib. Nat. 19. r. 25. r. and 24. v.) which analyses the differences between sculpture and painting, and emphasises the necessity of per-

spective in the execution of sculpture in low relief? 'The lines of sight,' writes Leonardo, 'which are between the object and the eye, when they reach the surface of a painting, are all intersected at a uniform boundary. The lines which pass from the eye to a piece of sculpture have different boundaries and are of varying lengths; the line which is longest extends to the limb which is further away than the rest and consequently this limb appears smaller*. . . . such diminution will not be perceptible in painting as it is in sculpture . . . Light and shade are essential to sculpture. In this respect the sculptor is aided by the nature of the relief which produces these of its own accord . . . the lines of perspective in sculpture do not seem in any way true (compared with those of painting).' In the technique of the Albizzi carving you see the young student refusing to give up experiments which the maturer artist had to abandon. 'Conventional!' Never was any artist, or any piece of sculpture, less bound by the fetters of a convention made for lesser souls and slighter workmanship.

The next chapter will be devoted to considering the date when Leonardo carved this Madonna, a date which has been taken for granted in previous pages and must now be shown to be the most probable in a somewhat short period of his early career in Florence.

* Compare Leonardo's 'Libro di Pittura,' I. 37 (Ed. Heinrich Ludwig, Vol. I., p. 80, Vienna, 1882): 'Ma il basso rilevo è di più speculazione senza comparazione al tutto rilevo e s'accosta in grandezza di speculazione alquanto alla pittura, perchè è obligato alla prospettiva.'

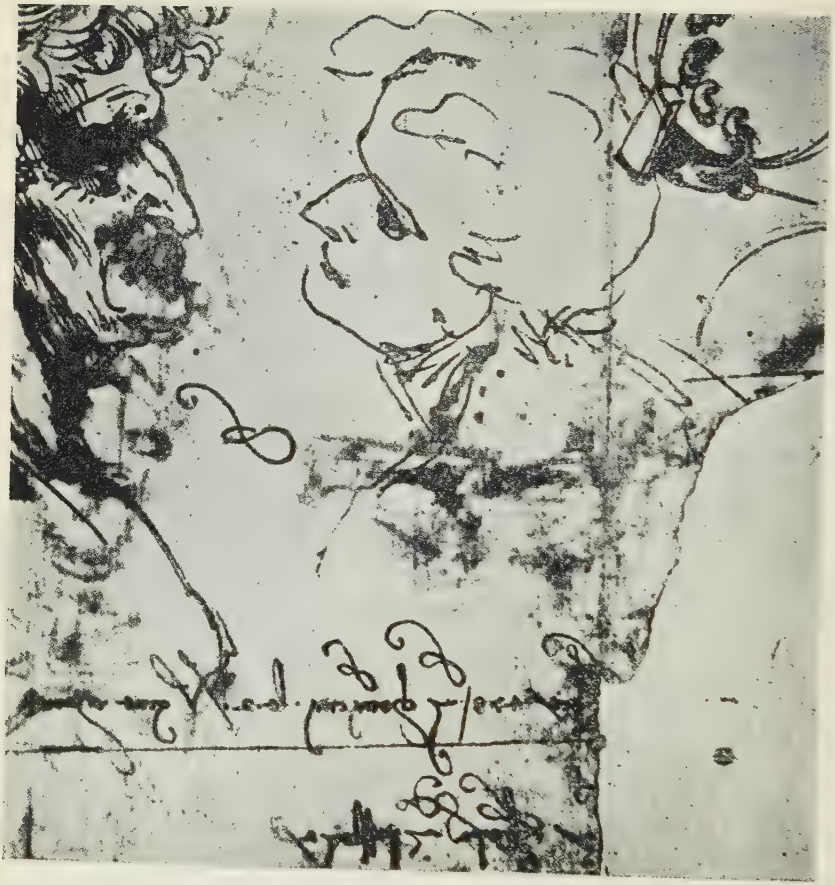
CHAPTER IV.

The Date of Leonardo's Madonna.

IN the room containing the drawings by great masters, in the Uffizi, is preserved the leaf of a sketch-book of white, rather thin, ribbed paper, measuring 20 by $26\frac{3}{4}$ centimetres. It has been reproduced by Dr. Jens Thiis. A large piece of the right-hand lower corner has been torn off, so that a great deal of the drawings of machinery on that side of the sheet is lost, and with it a part of that characteristic handwriting by which an authentic manuscript by Leonardo can so certainly be recognised. The centre of the left-hand sheet is filled with two profiles facing one another; one is an old man, still firm and erect, with hair abundant, and a sunken black eye that still seems to preserve the keen directness of its glance. With bold rapid strokes, though fewer this time, and lighter, is drawn the foreshortened profile of the young man opposite, whose figure bends, while his eye looks upwards as if in adoration. Above these heads, along the top of the sheet, are two lines referring to one, Fioravanti of Pistoia, whose friendship for the writer is affectionately recorded.

Dr. Thiis traces back this family to 1267. In collaboration with Benci di Cione, it was Neri Fioravanti who built the Bargello (1333–1345). Müntz mentions an Aristotele di Fioravanti who settled at Moscow.

At the bottom of the manuscript, in what is now the



MANUSCRIPT NO. 446 IN THE UFFIZI, WITH SKETCHES OF HEADS AND MACHINERY BY LEONARDO DA VINCI (1478). SIZE 26¾CM. × 20CM.

Upon it is written, in Leonardo's own hand, '*In September* 1478, *I began the two Madonnas* [one in St. Ilario] *and a similar one in Pistoia.*' I have inserted the words in square brackets where the manuscript is torn.

right-hand corner, are two mutilated lines which can be clearly deciphered, though they do not furnish a good example of Leonardo's handwriting, being evidently written quickly and full of odd flourishes, as would be natural in a young man who had not yet developed the precise accuracy of such a manuscript (for instance) as 'The Flight of Birds.'

The Italian (which I reproduce) is abbreviated, but it is certainly as follows, as may be seen by holding it before a mirror :— . . . *bre* 1478 *j chomiciaj le* 2 *S. Vgine Marie* . . . Beneath is written . . . *e chopa j pisstoja* . . . Being translated, this means '[In Septem]*ber* 1478 *I began the two Madonnas* [one at Sant' Ilario] *and a similar one in Pistoia.*'

It will be observed that the month is uncertain. I have only chosen (with Professor Thiis) the first that would fit. But the real gap caused by the tear in the paper, which I have reproduced, is that which I have filled up with the words in square brackets : [*one at Sant' Ilario*]. It will remain for subsequent pages of this essay to show that they give the most probable reading of words for ever lost to us, and it is of course the first time that this reading has been suggested ; for neither Berenson nor any other of the great authorities knew of the existence of the Albizzi carving at Sant' Ilario when their books were published ; and these 'two Madonnas' have never been certainly identified, though many suggestions have been made to explain a passage hitherto unrelated to any known work of the artist. I naturally feel no necessity to agree that both, or either, of these Madonnas must have been paintings. Indeed, the coincidence that one is definitely connected with Pistoia, and that at this particular date Verrocchio's pupils were at work on a definite commission for sculpture in Pistoia, seems

to me to indicate that one, if not both, of these Madonnas did imply a work in sculpture rather than in painting.

It is well known that the citizens of Pistoia admired the work from Verrocchio's *bottega*, whence came in 1476 the altar-piece for the sacrament-chapel in their cathedral. In the next year Verrocchio was given the commission for their marble monument of Cardinal Forteguerra, besides the city Arms upon the council house and a bust of Christ.

In 1477–78 Verrocchio's whole workshop was moved to Pistoia, where we know that Lorenzo da Credi helped to carry out this commission; and therefore in 1478 Leonardo worked alone in Florence without his master's usual pupils, but not without the work that master had been finishing, and what better opportunity could he have had for considering the possibility of improving one of those works by his own changes? If I am right, 1478 is the date of the Albizzi Madonna, the date when Leonardo had reached the age of twenty-six, and was to have nearly four more years in Florence before he went to Milan.

The period of Leonardo's life before the move to Milan contains the only years in which the Albizzi carving is likely to have been done. Ideas that had once been completed—even ideas sufficiently advanced to indicate assured completion—he far too often threw away and passed to something new. He would not have dreamt of repeating in Milan any theme which had been fashionably worked to death in Florence; and in Milan, too, his whole time ('for sixteen years,' says Sabba Castiglione) was taken up, as far as sculpture was concerned, with the Cavallo. We are limited, therefore, to the period from 1469, the latest date for his entrance to Verrocchio's *bottega*, to the end of 1481, the earliest date he can have gone

to Milan; and my previous suggestion involves not only that Verrocchio's group (Fig. V), with the Child on his Mother's left, was completed and well known before 1478, but that none of the copies of the Albizzi group (Fig. L) here reproduced, with the Child on his Mother's right (from Fig. A to Fig. R), was begun before 1478; for these are copies of Leonardo and not of Verrocchio; and this condition must especially hold good of the Della Robbia rendering with the bird in the boy's right hand (Fig. B). As far as I know, it holds good in every case. There seems to me no difficulty in ascribing the group from Prato (Fig. B) to a date after 1478. I have already given reasons for thinking that Fig. R was not the work of Rossellino (who died in the year of the Albizzi carving, 1478), but of Francesco di Simone, who died at the age of fifty-six, in 1493. Neither the marble of Fig. H, nor the designs shown in Figs. C, G, and K, present any antagonistic problem. The other Della Robbia (Fig. A) is certainly later than 1478, as must be Fig. D.

Two of Leonardo's drawings in the British Museum have aroused a question in my mind as to how the reversal of the position in the Albizzi group took place. They are reproduced in Venturi's book, and they each show that little roundheaded window which seems to have been a feature of the room in which Verrocchio's pupils worked. One drawing is a sketch for the Madonna del Gatto, with the Child seated on his Mother's left knee, and clasping a cat. Though the heads are somewhat sketchy, the main lines are strong enough to show through the paper; and on the other side is the same group reversed, with the Child, of course, upon the Mother's right, and the Virgin's head sketched in three different positions.

Is it not possible that when Leonardo had drawn Verrocchio's group, while his usual comrades had gone to Pistoia, he turned the paper over, noted the main lines of the sketch showing through, and at once finished off another drawing—with the Child on the right? He had, indeed, produced the exact reverse of his first effort and of Verrocchio's original (V in my table).

The fact of this reversal is of course much more important than either its origin or its process. At any rate, the change from Verrocchio's original position (as revealed for the first time in Leonardo's carving) provides the true explanation of what has hitherto been a real difficulty, inasmuch as a whole series of similar groups have until now had to be referred back to a design by Verrocchio which exhibited an entirely different arrangement of the figures. To-day it is evident that the Albizzi carving is the link that has so long been missing in this chain of artistic development, and is in truth the actual model of which nearly all works later than the Verrocchio are copies. At once, it seems to me, the whole series becomes more logical and more interesting; but not one either of her later or of her earlier rivals is worthy to be compared with Leonardo's Madonna. Consider, for instance, Mino da Fiesole; look at the Madonnas of the Riario monument, of the Roundel (in the Museo Nazionale) with a winged cherub holding a cross below it, or the upright Madonna (in the same collection) holding the Child straight in front of her as he sits upon a parapet. Or take Benedetto da Majano, either in the altarpiece of Santa Fina or in the Madonna dell' Ulivo, in Prato Cathedral (1480). I shall be referring to other instances later on. Leonardo's design is finer than them all.

Since the Albizzi carving must be later in date than the

Verrocchio Madonna, it is clear that examples of this group made after 1478 are more likely to follow Leonardo's position of the figures than Verrocchio's arrangement. Any hard-and-fast rule would be obviously preposterous, and indeed even in the small compass of my table I thought it only right to reproduce (in Figs. E and F) two groups which are later than 1478, but do not follow Leonardo in this respect. However if my argument is worth anything at all, we ought to find no trace of Leonardo's grouping in Luca della Robbia's work; we ought to find Leonardo's type of composition (with the Bird, the Apple, and the Child upon his Mother's right) at least as often as Verrocchio's arrangement in works by Andrea della Robbia; and by the time of Giovanni della Robbia, the Leonardo type will be established and copied far more often than Verrocchio's. Certainly, if any critic could contradict every one of these statements, a large proportion of my case would be seriously weakened; but I think it will be admitted that these statements can be confirmed. An examination of a very large number of examples was necessary; but it has been well worth while to undertake it, and I will now give the results.

CHAPTER V.

Of the Della Robbias, and others.

BY Mr. Percy Macquoid, the method used by the Della Robbias has been briefly and clearly described. Luca (the eldest) baked his modelled clay until it was light cinnamon-red. Sometimes he worked over it with a tool; he then dipped it in an enamel composed of fine sand, oxidised tin, and lead, which evenly covered it with a white glistening glaze. This was wiped off from the parts that were to be coloured, from the blue background, and from the borders of fruit, flowers, or leaves. The whole was then baked again in a very hot furnace, leaving an adamantine surface, with brittle terra-cotta beneath.

Luca was born in 1399 and died in 1482. He was a follower of Ghiberti, and his most famous marble sculpture, the Cantoria, was done when he was thirty-one. His first dated work in enamelled terra-cotta was the Tabernacle of Peretola, in which he also used bronze and marble. It has been imagined that his white enamel on a blue background was first suggested by the marble on blue tiles of the earlier Campanile carvings, but I doubt this. One of his largest works in this style is the Stemma, in the South Kensington Museum, which was begun after 1466 for Andrea di Pazzi. As a special tribute to the royal godfather and client, René de Provence, it was set upon the wall of Andrea's villa near Fiesole. The position at once recalls the place of Leonardo's Madonna on the wall of Albizzi's villa near Florence, and it is curious that both these

celebrated families had got into serious trouble for treasonable practices at various times. The Pazzi conspiracy will be mentioned later on, in our consideration of the famous sketch made by Leonardo, of Bernardo di Bandino Baroncelli hanging dead from the battlements, in December, 1479. This sketch is the only trace we have of a commission given to Leonardo, and eventually carried out by Botticelli, of a very similar nature to that undertaken in 1434 by Castagno, who made a painting of the exiled Rinaldo degli Albizzi and his adherents; they had been condemned as rebels and were hanged head downwards. Such pictorial warnings had been fashionable as long previously as the days of Giottino in the fourteenth century.

It will be remembered that the Albizzis' house at Sant' Ilario was bought from them by the Federighi family, and it was Luca della Robbia who made the marble tomb of Benozzo Federighi in the SS. Trinità, Florence, between 1454 and 1456. Luca sometimes uses a halo for both Mother and Son, and No. 447—1864 in Room 63 of the Victoria and Albert Museum is based on a design of his; more often he has no haloes at all. His goddess-like Madonnas have an archaic nobility of classical line; his relief is rather flat, and he can dare a breadth of plain surface which his lesser descendants filled with design. He never duplicated his work himself, as far as is known, and in only one instance—the Impruneta Madonna—did he allow his nephew, Andrea, to repeat it. Probably he did very little after he was seventy-one, for at that age he refused the Presidency of the Guild of Masters in Stone and Wood. Professor Allen Marquand's books should be consulted on the whole subject.

Luca della Robbia is the member of his famous family least likely to have studied Leonardo's Madonna. He was nearly eighty when she was carved and died soon afterwards. I have examined thirty-two examples of his work in this kind. Out of all of them, nine only show the Child standing, and always on his Mother's left, as in Verrocchio's design. I need not specify more than three here:—the typical and famous lunette of the Via dell' Agnolo, in the Museo Nazionale, Florence, which was done in 1445 and is a magnificent example of his best work in glazed terra-cotta; the Madonna of the Apple, formerly in the collection of the Marquis Carlo Viviani della Robbia, in which the Child holds an apple in his left hand, while his right holds his Mother's drapery round her neck; and the beautiful Madonna of Urbino (1449) with the naked Child. There are four instances in which Luca places the Child on his Mother's right, including No. 4411 in the Victoria and Albert Museum. In every case he is not standing. There is no bird to be found anywhere. The Child never has his finger in his mouth. There are six instances of the apple. None show that curious position of the fruit upon the Madonna's thumb which was invented in 1478.

I need scarcely say that this apple is a very old 'motive,' both in painting and sculpture, whether it takes the form of the simple fruit (as in Leonardo) or of a ball, or of a small globe representing the universe. But the three things which chiefly characterise the Albizzi group are, (1) the absence of a halo from the Mother when it is given to the Child, (2) the curious gesture with which the Child presses his apple down upon the outside curve of the Madonna's extended thumb, (3)

the bird with folded wings held tightly in the Child's hand. This bird is without doubt a member of the finch family; some critics think it a goldfinch in other groups; it might be a sparrow if Leonardo had been one who desired to illustrate a well-known passage from the Bible. It is certainly not the early Christian dove which represented the soul of the faithful, when it was not associated with Noah. In any case, I have only found one bird held by the Child in any similar group which might have been carved before 1478, and that is in a marble relief by an unknown artist which is No. 7631—1861 in Room 62 of the Victoria and Albert Museum. The group has no haloes. The Child is seated on his Mother's left. He holds a fluttering dove by one wing (see Nos. E and F in my Table of Comparisons) in both hands, and its other wing is outstretched.

Taking the three characteristic points I have mentioned in the Albizzi carving, I do not think any example of a similar group, with the naked Child standing on his Mother's *right*, can be found which will show all of them before 1478.

Andrea della Robbia (born 1435, died 1525) remained under the influence of his uncle, Luca, until about 1480; but his first independent work was the entirely separate commission for the Ospedale degl' Innocenti in 1465. He lived to the ripe old age of ninety and probably worked very little after completing the Almadiano bust at Viterbo in 1510. His Madonnas became very popular because they were more human than Luca's and more feminine. A tender prettiness, an attractive materialism, a gentle purity and languor characterised the types with which he replaced the classical divinities of Luca. He abandoned the plain blue blackgrounds

and broad surfaces of the older master. He introduced clouds, doves, cherubs and hands to fill the empty spaces of his designs, and surrounded them with wreaths and many-coloured flowers and fruit. His boy with a dolphin, now in Mrs. E. C. Hoyt's collection in New York, was done very soon after the lovely group now in the Palazzo Vecchio which Verrocchio made for Lorenzo de Medici's villa at Careggi about 1477, an incarnation of youthful happiness which became the type of many another laughing boy of the next few decades. The lunette representing the archangel Michael now in the Vierweg Collection, Brunswick, he made for S. Michele Archangelo in Faenza in 1475. The curly hair, and the breastplate with lion's heads on the shoulders, are very reminiscent of Leonardo.

Of all his family Andrea della Robbia is most likely not only to have seen the Albizzi carving in the first flush of its success but to have consciously compared it with the earlier Verrocchio which it replaced in 1478; and there is no doubt of his preference for the later group. I have examined about nineteen examples of his work which are of a similar nature. Sixteen of them place the Child on the Madonna's right, and in ten of these he is standing. As is only natural the Albizzi bird is found in five of these ten groups, the first time it appears in Della Robbia work. Andrea does not use the apple at all; but twice the Child is holding his mother's thumb. In the Madonna of the Architects, in the Bargello, the Child, standing on his Mother's right knee, has put his thumb into his mouth; and the group may be compared with the altarpiece of the Campo Santo in Arezzo, in which the gesture of blessing is used. In only three of Andrea's

groups does the child stand on his Mother's left, after the manner of Verrocchio, whose gesture of blessing is also introduced four times.

Andrea's son Giovanni, was born in 1469 and died in 1529 at the age of sixty. His first dated independent work is the magnificent Lavabo of Santa Maria Novella made in 1497, nineteen years after Leonardo's group. The Madonna and Angels done in 1489 for the Opera del Duomo were made in collaboration with Andrea. His last dated work is in the Loggia of the Pistoia Hospital in 1525. The vigorous figure on the spectator's extreme left in the first relief ('Clothing the Naked') shows much of Leonardo's influence, as does Giovanni's 'Head of a Warrior' in the Museo di Maioliche, Pesaro. But he borrowed unblushingly from everybody: groupings from Verrocchio, hanging garlands from Desiderio, heads and figures from Ghirlandaio or Perugino; whatever he thought likely to appeal to the popular taste. Coloured details of every kind swarmed in his designs. Like Andrea he was fond of haloes on every occasion. In order to supply a brisk demand, he even gave up Luca's imperishable glaze or enamel, and splashed his terra-cotta with vivid oil-painting directly on the surface of the baked clay. If it had not been for the extraordinary activities of his youngest son, Girolamo, who worked for François I. in the old style, with his brother Luca, at the chateau de Madrid in France, the true Della Robbia method would have vanished even earlier than it did.

It has become almost impossible in many instances to distinguish between the work of Andrea della Robbia and that of his son Giovanni, except by the traces of decadence

and industrial commercialism which I have just indicated. No doubt their workshop was infinitely busier than that of Verrocchio, though this latter must have turned out far more work (now unknown) than has often been realised. But when it came to the series of groups with which Leonardo's Madonna is related, Giovanni seems to have rejected the Verrocchio convention with great decision, and he chose the Leonardo type, which had evidently achieved a wider popularity. In twenty, therefore, out of the twenty-four examples I have examined, the Child is on the Madonna's right, and in eleven of these twenty he is standing. Eleven times the Albizzi bird is reproduced, and in nearly every case when the gesture of blessing is used the bird accompanies it. In one group the Child holds his Mother's thumb. Most significant of all is the only group in which the apple appears; it is held by the Child's left hand upon the Madonna's left thumb precisely as in the Albizzi carving.

In Room 63 of the Victoria and Albert Museum the three groups attributed to Andrea are Nos. 7630—1861, 7547—1861, and 5633—1859. The last two are evidently replicas, and show the Child standing on the right; in No. 7547 he holds the bird. The Nynehead Madonna may be compared with them. The Giovanni in Room 63 is No. 4412—1857, and shows the Child standing on his Mother's right knee with the gesture of Blessing.

Fifteen of the examples in Room 62 of the Victoria and Albert Museum are comparable with Leonardo's group. The eleven which show the Child on his Mother's left are much more likely to be earlier than 1479 than later, and I have already mentioned that one of these shows (No. 7631) a

fluttering bird by an unknown sculptor. By another 'unknown' is the group showing Verrocchio's gesture of Blessing, with the Child on the right. This is the terra-cotta numbered 7653—1861 which may well be after 1478. In my table of comparisons (figure K) I have reproduced No. 7576—1861 which is labelled 'Relief in terra-cotta. School of Verrocchio,' and I should wish to state that my photograph does not quite do justice to the skill and modelling of this original. The Child, though on his Mother's right, has Verrocchio's gesture of Blessing; and both have haloes. I am not at all convinced that this is earlier than 1478. The only carving certainly done before 1479 which shows the Child on the right is the one by Antonio Rossellino (1427–1478) which is labelled 108—1878; but the Child is sitting. It is remarkable because the Virgin has a halo, but the Child has not, whereas Leonardo's Child has a halo, and his Virgin has none. There are, in the fifteen examples examined, only four instances of the Blessing, and only one of the Apple, which is found in a marble relief numbered 7652—1861 of the school of Mino da Fiesole (1450–1500). The Child stands on his Mother's left and his right hand is blessing.

It will not, I hope, be thought unnecessary that I should have discussed this question at a length which may well be wearisome, though I have omitted almost every detail of more than eighty carvings examined. But every consideration which fortifies the possibility of the date, 1478, is of value, and a mere statement of dogmatic generalisations might easily be challenged if an indication of the evidence were not forthcoming. As a matter of artistic excellence I naturally lay no stress on the superiority of one side over the other for

the position of either figure in that sacred group of Mother and Child. But it is no less certain than curious that the change made from Verrocchio's grouping by Leonardo is pleasing to us to-day, and we can now feel a greater confidence that it was even more pleasing to his contemporaries.

It may be useful to add a short list (with dates) of a few of the sculptors whose careers overlapped that period of Leonardo's life (1452–1482) during which he resided in Florence. The list is not meant to be complete, but only to be of assistance to readers of these pages:—

Lorenzo Ghiberti ...	1378–1455	Mino da Fiesole ...	1431–1484
Donatello	1386–1466	Benedetto da Maiano ...	1442–1497
Michelozzo	1391–1472	Andrea Verrocchio ...	1435–1488
Luca della Robbia ...	1399–1482	Matteo Civitali	1435–1501
Agostino di Duccio ...	1418–1481	Andrea della Robbia ...	1435–1525
Antonio Rossellino ...	1427–1478	Francesco di Simone ...	1440–1493
Desiderio da Settignano	1428–1464	Benedetto da Majano...	1442–1493
Antonio Pollaiuolo ...	1429–1498	Leonardo da Vinci ...	1452–1519

CHAPTER VI.

Leonardo's Youth in Florence.

NEARLY every fact we know of Leonardo's life before he left Florence for Milan will be found to fit in with the carving of the Albizzi Madonna in 1478, and only a few details need here be recalled in order to suggest that the period from 1469 to 1482 has actually revealed traces of the germination of all Leonardo's great work later on, and that in the year particularly selected he was certainly in Florence and certainly able to alter and enrich Verrocchio's designs in Verrocchio's own studio, whether painting or sculpture were in question.

Leonardo was born at Vinci, five miles north of Empoli, on the right bank of the Arno to the west of Florence, in 1452, the love-child of a sturdy and successful Florentine notary, Ser Piero da Vinci, and of Caterina, a peasant girl from the district where Piero's family had their country house. That family can be traced back to 1339 and still exists among the folds of Monte Albano, near Vinci, as has been shown by Gustavo Uzielli (Ricerche Intorno. Florence, 1872. Rome, 1884). It was full of creative virility. Nor was it so denuded of romance as its almost hereditary cult of the law might possibly suggest. Dante's master, Brunnetto Latini, can hardly have been a sombre pedant. The racy idiom in the letters of Lappo Mazzei da Prato is by no means lawyer-like. Such

men as Brunelleschi and Masaccio were themselves the sons of notaries. The alchemy of nature is as infinite as it is mysterious. '*Ce notaire Barbe-Bleue*,' as Séailles calls Ser Piero, had had three wives, and five children by the third, before he decided, at the age of sixty, to marry for the fourth time and to increase his family by a new progeny of six.

Florentines of that time were never afraid of another wedding. Francesco di Bartolommeo di Zanobi del Giocondo (1460–1528) had married Camilla Rucellai and Tommasa Villani before he found the Neapolitan, Mona Lisa Gherardini, in 1495, who was to be the supreme inspiration of Ser Piero da Vinci's son. Yet there is something even more remarkable about so determined and prolific a Benedict as Ser Piero himself, and we may well wonder at the providential accident which took the first of all that vigour in its prime and threw it into the arms of the young Caterina. I do not think we need look wholly to the shadowy tenderness of the peasant-girl for the magic genius of her son.

Domenico, born of Ser Piero's third wife, Margharita, had a descendant named Tommaso Vinci, near Montespertoli, who was discovered in 1869 by the indefatigable Uzielli to have named the eldest of many peasant sons Leonardo. This is a good proof of strength of blood in the family from which Leonardo sprang, and there was more, we may be certain, in his father than the virility implied by four marriages and a numerous offspring. That Ser Piero took his love-child into his own father's house, after both himself and Caterina had gone their several ways and married other people, is a somewhat singular fact in the middle of the fifteenth century. His continued sympathy and affection (in spite of all new ties)

may be argued from the further facts that he took his son to Verrocchio as soon as he recognised the boy's genius, and that he secured a commission for the young Leonardo from the monastery of S. Donato, with which he was himself professionally connected. But, as we shall see, the contract for that commission does not betray any undue favouritism for the artist.

From the taxation return in the archives of Florence, we learn that in 1457 (when the little Leonardo was five) Ser Piero and the whole family lived together with Leonardo's grandfather, Antonio, then eighty-four; his grandmother, Lucia, who was twenty-one years younger; his uncle, Francesco; and his aunt, Alessandra. They dwelt near the church, 'nel popolo di S. Croce,' a district of Vinci. They also rented half a house in Florence and a house at Fiesole (*Amoretti, Memorie Storiche.* Milan, 1804). Ser Piero was then just twenty-eight and now married to a Florentine lady of good birth, named Albiera Amadori. Leonardo's mother, Caterina, was already the wife of Acchattabrigo di Piero del Vaccha, of Vinci. Neither his first stepmother, Albiera, nor his second, Francesca di ser Giovanni Lanfredini (married as a girl of fifteen, also from Florence, in 1465), had any children. To that extent, therefore, perhaps the boy was fortunate, for his position might easily have been very different, as may be gathered from the fact that when their father died, in July, 1504, his brothers refused him a share of the inheritance on the score of his illegitimacy; and when their uncle Francesco died in 1507, they even disputed Leonardo's right to the few roods of ground Francesco had expressly left him. The lawsuit was undecided in 1511, and Leonardo had to beg for the

intervention of Marshal d'Amboise, of Louis XII. of France, and of Cardinal Ippolito d'Este to get it settled. In the boy's early days there was a far greater kindliness; and the man who assiduously interpreted to him the wishes of Isabella d'Este in 1506 was Alessandro degli Amadori, who was the brother of Ser Piero's first wife, and called himself Leonardo's uncle, a relationship which, I like to think, was not claimed solely on the grounds of the young artist's later fame. This Alessandro is probably the 'uncle,' mentioned by Vasari, who gave to Ottaviano di Medici the cartoon of the 'Fall' originally designed for tapestry for the King of Portugal. The cartoon was, without doubt, a work of these youthful days in Florence, and its complete disappearance is a tragic loss.

By 1469 we learn from the same taxation-returns that Ser Piero da Vinci was living behind the Signoria, on the site where Sangallo was soon to build the Palazzo Gondi. He was procurator to the cloister of S. Annunziata, financial adviser to the monks of S. Donato, and legal assistant to the Medici. He has left far more traces in the public archives than his celebrated son. By that year, Leonardo must have started living independently at the age of seventeen, an age which would roughly correspond to about twenty-five in modern Englishmen. At seventeen Mantegna painted his first masterpiece for S. Sophia at Padua. At fifteen Michael Angelo had carved the Satyr's mask which Lorenzo the Magnificent admired. Perugino began his apprenticeship at nine; Andrea del Sarto, at seven. Leonardo was probably first lodged in the same house where Verrocchio's *bottega* was established; and Florence was soon filled with those stories of amazing

versatility, of uncommon strength and skill, of extraordinary charm and beauty which find so resonant an echo in the pages of Vasari. Even to the wholesale adulation of his biographer, however, one point in that brilliant kaleidescope of varied energy shone clear. 'He never left off his beloved drawing *and modelling—cose che gli andavano a fantasia più d'alcun altra.*'

The lovely 'Annunciation' of the Louvre is a proof that before 1478 he had turned this 'beloved drawing' to good account, and had in his own inimitable way improved upon his Master's treatment of the same subject, now in the Uffizi. This is a picture which in many ways deserves the most careful comparison with our Albizzi group, for it shows that shaping of legend into humanity, that search for the highest in the truth of motherhood, which was to characterise the art of Leonardo all his life. No religious symbol is invoked to deepen an impression he could rouse without such adventitious aids. The beauty and the appeal of the whole simple scene depend on the sheer skill of the artist in his presentation of the feelings of its actors. The Virgin's drooping eyelids will be even better known to us. She was created by the same hand which gave the Albizzi Madonna to the world soon afterwards. She is of the true Florentine type of Leonardo's youth, the type so many tried to imitate, and failed.

By 1472, when scarcely twenty, Leonardo was already in the 'red book' of the Company of Painters. Since the well-known handwriting appears on the 5th of August, 1473, in a manuscript in the Uffizi (No. 8. P) representing a view of the Apennines near Lucca (Müller-Walde), we must imagine that Florence already knew what Pacioli called '*quella*

ineffabile sinistra mano'; and a letter written by a friend of Leonardo from India to Giuliano de' Medici (quoted by Richter II. 130) reveals that his love of living creatures extended to refusing even to let them be killed for food. These were peculiarities that would have been noticeable in any pupil in a 'bottega' of that day. When they are told of one who was to become the greatest painter of his time they indicate the closeness of the affection which the brilliant youth inspired in all who knew him.

Walter Pater imagined Leonardo's deathbed; and I can think of few sadder endings than that of the old Florentine exile in the little castle of Cloux near Amboise, dying in the arms of the devoted Milanese, Francesco Melzi, by the alien waters of the Loire. But what I should love to picture is the boyhood of that amazing genius which was to gather up within its own mysterious province the whole learning of the world around him, and was to express itself in forms of delicately enigmatic beauty which no lesser soul in all the simpler art that followed was to equal. As he grew up to be a man, 'life,' which for so many young men of his time meant merely miscellaneous embraces, became more and more in the nature of a mystic dream. Behind its shifting phantasmagoria lay so many secrets that only he could guess. Above it shone the cold, clear light of an ideal as distant, as impossible for others, as a star. The calm, impersonal, scientific outlook of his later life must have in some way been foreshadowed in his boyhood. Yet it must also have been transfigured by that ardent strength, that purity of unmixed impulse, which can so often illuminate the youth of future greatness.

LEONARDO'S YOUTH IN FLORENCE.

The crucial year, 1478, is signalised on the 10th of January by a commission from the Signory of Florence to paint an altarpiece (instead of Piero del Pollaiuolo) for the chapel of St. Bernard in the Palazzo Vecchio, and they paid him twenty-five florins, on account, on the 16th of March. The commission was eventually finished by Filippino Lippi in 1484 and placed in the Hall of Lilies. It has now been transferred to the Uffizi. Leonardo never completed the sketches he had begun. Something seems definitely to have turned his attention from the work. Was it the commission for which his comrades were preparing in Pistoia? Or was it the Madonna he had begun for his friend Albizzi's house in Sant' Ilario?

The Pazzi Conspiracy took place that same year, and the interest it must have aroused in Leonardo is reflected in a vivid and gruesome sketch of one of the malefactors which he drew in December, 1479, of 'Bernardo di Bandino Baroncigli' (I give Leonardo's own spelling) who was hanged much later than the others because he had fled to Constantinople and was only delivered up to the Medici by the Sultan a year afterwards. The government had commissioned from the gentle Sandro Botticelli the portraits of the rebels suffering the last penalty, to be painted on the walls of the Palazzo Vecchio. The unhappy banker, Francesco di Pazzi, was thrown from the windows of the Signoria before the eyes of the rejoicing mob, and struggled in his death agony by the side of Salviati, Archbishop of Pisa, in his full canonicals. Leonardo evidently had a portion of the same task to fulfil, and he sketched the dead body of the worst villain of them all—*Uomo scelerato, audace, e che non conosceva paura . . .*

involto in ogni sorte di sceleratezza il Bandino fu il primo che gli passo (*Giulano di Medici*) *el petto con un pugnale,*' writes Poliziano, in words as true as they are forcible. Leonardo's own note beneath his sketch is: 'small tan-coloured cap, doublet of black satin, lined black jerkin, long blue cloak lined with foxes' breasts and the collar trimmed with black and red velvet, black hose.' He notes the costume of the dead murderer as impassively as he recorded his own father's death.

When I add that it is certain, from the archives, that Leonardo had a house of his own in Florence in 1481, I think that the chain of evidence need be carried no further. But this will be perhaps the opportunity to correct a date in Vasari's somewhat inaccurate chronology. In was in 1482 (not 1494) that Leonardo was in Milan. It was probably, therefore, about this time that he made the musical instrument 'with his own hand, of silver, very much in the form of a horse's skull, a wonderful and new thing,' which Vasari describes. Whatever it actually was, it seems more like the work of a sculptor than of a painter. The epigram made by the Court poet in Milan for the pedestal of the Sforza statue is luckily dated, February 25th, 1482. Leonardo must have been there at the time. He must have left Florence only at the end of 1481, and he was still there during the summer; for the monks of San Donato (the monastery just outside the southern gate of Florence, with which his father, Piero da Vinci, was connected) recorded in July, 1481, that Leonardo had received from them in March, 1480, an order to paint them an altarpiece, for which he was to be paid 'a third part of the property in the Val d'Elsa,' the monks reserving the right to buy it back after

three years for 300 florins. There were other stipulations which can scarcely have appealed to the young man, including a dowry of 150 florins which he was himself to pay to a young girl named in the contract—a provision which, I confess, intrigues me vastly. On September 28th, 1481, apparently in the desperate hope of rousing him to begin, the monks sent him a barrel of red wine. The hope was disappointed. We hear no more, in the monk's ledgers, of Leonardo. Again, it was another—Filippino Lippi—who completed the altarpiece in 1496; and 'The Adoration' he painted now hangs in the Uffizi, in the same room with Leonardo's wonderful and unfinished cartoon of the same subject, a cartoon which must certainly have been finished during its creator's youthful days in Florence, and may have preserved, in the figure of the Knight at the right-hand bottom corner of the design, a portrait of the artist himself—handsome, commanding, slightly disdainful, clearly aloof and separate from the crowd, certainly distinguished by something higher than beauty, something deeper than authority.

CHAPTER VII.

Leonardo the Sculptor.

IN the carving of the Albizzi Madonna we have the first example of its kind which will throw any light upon a portion of Leonardo's activity, in his youth in Florence, which has hitherto been left in almost complete darkness. It is difficult to realise the almost excessively parochial view of Italian cities in those days. To Florence, Leonardo was practically dead when he went off to Milan; but whatever he achieved after he had gone, Florence has ever claimed that the fine flower of his genius had been hers. And it is indeed true, as Professor Thiis and other scholars (though in less detail) have demonstrated, that the germ of nearly every great work on which Leonardo's highest fame is founded can be detected in the traces of the years from 1472 to 1482, when he was first realising his own strength. The Albizzi Madonna is the only proof hitherto discovered that Milan was not the first city to arouse in him that love of sculpture which is so amply demonstrated in the important commission he was given immediately after he had arrived there. It is most improbable that the order for a colossal equestrian statue would have been bestowed upon him if it had been his first attempt. Undoubtedly he had laid the foundation of a sculptor's reputation not only in the Albizzi Madonna, but in other carvings that may still exist. This will become

clearer if we realise a little more of the artistic and social conditions of the Milan in which Leonardo was later on to find that last and most devoted friend, Francesco Melzi (born in 1498), to whom we owe it that the priceless manuscripts, bequeathed to him by their writer, have survived to us at all.

The Duke Francesco Sforza had died in 1466. By 1472 Galeazzo Maria had determined to erect an equestrian statue to his memory. For ten years the choice of the fortunate sculptor was discussed all over Italy. The Mantegazza brothers, Cristoforo (died 1482) and Antonio (died 1495) had withdrawn. Antonio del Pollaiuolo (died 1498) had submitted models and designs. There were also other possible candidates on the spot, like Giovanni Antonio Amadeo (1447–1522) who did the Certosa reliefs; Benedetto Briosco, who was also at work on the Certosa in 1483; Cristoforo Solari, who made the famous tombs of Ludovico Sforza and Beatrice d'Este; or Ambrogio Foppa, known as Il Caradosso (1452–1526), who carved the sacristy of San Satiro. On none of these did the choice fall. By 1482, Ludovico Sforza, il Moro, had governed Milan for three years, and Bramante had lived there for about nine. Ludovico's idea of government implied vast buildings and enormous monuments, such echoes of princely pomp and circumstance as were quite alien to republican Florence; and so, just as Donatello went away to Padua to design his magnificent Gattamelata, or Verrocchio journeyed to Venice for the Colleone, so Leonardo had to leave Florence to design his statue of Francesco Sforza; for it was on Leonardo, that horseman of renown, that Ludovico's choice eventually fell, in spite of all the competition among other sculptors for this brilliant prize. To say that this choice was

guided by the artist's own letter of recommendation (which I quote just below), without any attention to practical evidences of that perfected art of sculpture to which he unhesitatingly laid claim, is to misunderstand the whole atmosphere of Milan or of Ludovico's mind. The choice was made because Leonardo had proved his merit, in the only possible way, by the sculpture he had previously produced. Ludovico, in fact, might have used the words which the King of France, François I., was to use so emphatically later on, giving sculpture the first place among the many great gifts of his visitor: 'Never has any man come into the world who knew so much as Leonardo, and that not only in matters of sculpture, painting, and architecture, for in addition he was a great philosopher.'

There is literally nothing which can incontestably be proved by documentary evidence to have been carved by Leonardo's hand. I can but point to possibilities in this direction, to probable attributions. It is in painting and in the sketches and writings of his innumerable manuscripts that I must discover my argument; yet in these will be found, I think, more of such first-hand evidence than exists in the case of any other artist of the first rank. And let us not forget that at the beginning of the passage I quoted (in Mr. McCurdy's admirable translation) from his *Treatise on Painting*, Leonardo says:—'As practising myself the art of sculpture no less than that of painting, and doing both the one and the other in the same degree, it seems to me that, without suspicion of unfairness, I may venture to give an opinion. . . .' And to this record may perhaps be added the famous letter in Leonardo's own hand to Ludovico Sforza:—'I can further execute sculpture in marble, bronze, or clay; also in painting

I can do as much as any one else, whoever he be. Moreover, I would undertake the commission of the bronze horse. . . .'

There must have been sketches and models for this statue almost immediately after Leonardo had arrived in Milan, if we are to judge from the epigram of 1482, quoted in the last chapter. In any case, Leonardo threw himself at first into the work with vigour. He studied other groups of a similar nature—the statue of Marcus Aurelius, the Four Horses in Venice, the Gattamelata at Padua. His real work was done, as so many manuscripts testify, in sketches from his own living models. For years the preliminaries went on, apparently without end. At last, in 1489, wearied with delay, Ludovico asked Pietro Alemanni, the Florentine Ambassador in Milan, to send another sculptor. There was not one to send. In April, 1490, Leonardo records: 'I recommenced the Cavallo.' In November, 1493, the plaster model was exhibited to cheering crowds, and in *Il Castello da Milano* Beltrami has preserved the poets' praises of its impressive beauty.

To suggest a doubt as to Leonardo's competence as a sculptor might seem, after this, false modesty, especially when we know that this great equestrian statue of Francesco Sforza was the wonder of the world during his lifetime and long afterwards; and so much has been written of that masterpiece since it was used as a target by the Gascon archers garrisoned in Milan, that I need say nothing here, except that they did not destroy it, and that both Cardinal d'Amboise and Hercule d'Este, Duke of Ferrara, knew of its existence in September, 1501. What happened after that, we know not (*Séailles*, p. 82, Ed. 1919). Francesco, triumphing upon his horse, has moved on into the same legendary mystery as his

Master; we may imagine that he has preceded, towards the shadow of the Infinite, that mounted knight of Dürer's marvellous engraving which has so many singularities in common with the sketches of the Italian's Cavallo that survive the statue. It was the sculptor Rustici (to be mentioned later) who brought the small model of the Cavallo into France that afterwards adorned the collection of Leone Leoni, and has since been lost; and Eugène Müntz records the beautiful little gilt-bronze statuette which was bought in Venice by that skilled collector, Madame Edouard André. This may be an interesting contemporary record, but it is not likely to have preserved the master's handiwork.

It is just because the Cavallo was itself so different from the work before us, and because the general public has hitherto known so little of the records connecting such work as the Albizzi carving with Leonardo, that I must briefly mention what evidence there actually is, and what is essential for our present purpose in it. Mainly of course it consists of his own manuscripts, by the wealth of which (not only in writing, but in sketches) we are more than compensated for the lack of authentic finished pieces which have survived. There is, for instance, a whole note-book which can be definitely assigned to those early days of his work in Florence with Verrocchio which are our main concern as regards the Albizzi carving, and out of the forty studies in this note-book (of which I shall have more to say later) at least seven are certainly devoted to the Madonna and her Child.

Though most of these studies should probably be referred to paintings, there is a small pen drawing in the Uffizi (No. 421) which is a very beautiful sketch for the

Madonna with the Cat (Berenson 1015), and deserves special mention in these pages. It is drawn on prepared paper ($12\frac{3}{4}$ by 11 cm.) with a peculiar bluish-green ink, which, says Professor Thiis, Leonardo does not use elsewhere; and it may represent the special surroundings under which this brilliant sketch from life was done early in 1478. The particular point I wish here to illustrate is that the Child, who is rolling over backwards, as he plays with the cat, and is only saved by his Mother's firm grasp on his left ankle, has been posed on what is without any doubt a high modelling-stand such as sculptors used. And on the back of the sheet the keen eyes of Berenson and Thiis discovered a faint but exact reversal of the Child's position, his Mother's arm being altered to a grip beneath his ankle instead of over it. To the possibility of another reversal in a similar sketch I have already referred. But I desire here to emphasise the sculptor's modelling-stand, which is, I think, more than the accident of Verrocchio's studio. Does it record the stand which Leonardo was to use for modelling the studies for the group at Sant' Ilario? As the reader may like to see it for himself, I have reproduced it as the last picture in my 'Table of Women,' printed for Chapter X.

In searching for documentary evidence concerning the years from 1469 to 1482, which we are particularly examining, we shall find that, apart from Leonardo's own manuscripts, there are also the public archives, the records of his contemporaries, and the biographies of later writers. Each have their value, though it be not so great as that of Leonardo's own handwriting; and in each we may find something to our present purpose. Vasari, for instance, must always be read with an accompanying knowledge of Antonio Billi (including the Anonimo Gaddiano) of

Paolo Giovio, and of Lomazzo, together with the scrupulous criticism of dates rendered possible by modern research since 1804, the year when Carlo Amoretti produced his *Memorie Storiche.* In Lomazzo (quoted by Mr. McCurdy) we find mention of a bas-relief of a horse in plaster and a head of Christ in terra-cotta modelled by Leonardo, which displayed 'the simplicity and innocence of childhood together with a certain suggestion of wisdom, understanding, and majesty.' I shall have more to say (page 83) of Lomazzo's arresting phrase; but Vasari has an even more important passage:— 'Leonardo worked in sculpture, executing in his youth, in terra-cotta, certain heads of women smiling . . . and likewise heads of children which seem to have come from the hand of a master.' And in his *Life of Verrocchio* the same writer mentions some of this artist's drawings of female heads, 'of which the features, expressions, and arrangement of the hair were constantly imitated for their exceeding beauty by Leonardo da Vinci.' * The Windsor Royal Library preserves one of these sketches of head-dress which may well have been taken by Leonardo from Verrocchio. I reproduce it in my 'Table of Women's Heads,' No. 3, and its likeness to the Albizzi profile on my title-page will at once be recognised. Beyond these smiling women and children, the stucco head copied from Verrocchio now in the Victoria and Albert Museum, and the two works recorded by Lomazzo, we have

* The original passages are: '. . . operò nella scultura, facendo nella sua giovinezza di terra alcune teste di femmine che ridone, che vanno formate per l'arte di gesso, e parimente teste di putti che paravano usciti di mano d'un maestro . . .'

'Teste di femmine con bell' arie ed acconciature di capelli quale per la sua bellezza Lionardo da Vinci sempre imitò . . .'—VASARI, *Le Vite.*

no hint of any examples of sculpture by Leonardo before he went to Milan, and I have often wondered why none of these delightful works have hitherto been discovered, though both Sir Claude Phillips and Mr. Eric Maclagan have made most interesting suggestions as to where we might look with success. The weak-faced 'Scipio,' in the Rattier Collection, at the Louvre, is certainly not by the hand that drew the glorious Warrior in the Malcolm Collection. If we add the project for an unknown equestrian statue of Trivulzio, recorded in Leonardo's manuscripts, we exhaust the whole authentic list of work of this period.

I do not propose to lay stress on the brilliantly-supported attribution by Sir Claude Phillips, made in 1899 and adopted by the authorities on the spot, that the little terra-cotta Madonna with the laughing open-mouthed Child in the Victoria and Albert Museum, hitherto ascribed to Rossellino was 'possibly executed by the youthful Leonardo in the atelier of Verrocchio.' I think the bust of the young John the Baptist in the same museum is far more worthy of that attribution. The Lucas bust need not detain us save to deprecate the harm done by Dr. von Bode, not in this latter case alone, but in several others. His reckless attribution of an Englishman's work of the nineteenth century to a Florentine of the fifteenth has created a prejudice which must be resolutely resisted in the inquiry now before us. It is a danger signal to every one who desires, as I do, to prove the authenticity of any comparatively unknown masterpiece; but it need not obscure in others the frank consideration of new facts concerning a carving that can be traced authentically back without a break to the years and to the district in which Leonardo lived and worked.

That Verrocchio, the sculptor, was his father's friend is one of the most singular proofs of good fortune the young Leonardo could have experienced, and that Verrocchio (only seventeen years older than his friend's son) was also great enough to recognise the greatness of his pupil is possibly the most fortunate circumstance in the history of Italian art. The story that Leonardo painted the kneeling angel in Verrocchio's 'Baptism' is accepted by many modern critics. No definite proof can be alleged against it, and it is certainly by a pupil of Verrocchio. But for these pages, the significance of it will chiefly be that it suggests his copying and improving other works of this same Master, and that it reminds us of the foremost place taken, from his earliest years, by sculpture, in Verrocchio's career. It needs no prejudice to see the peculiar grace and tenderness of Leonardo in his Master's very beautiful 'Christ and St. Thomas'; and though it is true that Perugino and Lorenzo da Credi were Leonardo's comrades, and it is in painting alone that we have hitherto known the few masterpieces of Leonardo's completed art, yet I must urge the possibility of sculpture having largely occupied his studies in these early days (with Francesco di Simone as a fellow-pupil) in a great sculptor's workshop, a workshop which must have supplied a very large demand and yet has hitherto seemed to have left so few examples that survived. Vasari specially mentions Leonardo's 'modelling' as well as 'drawing'; and it is also worth notice that the only other member of the Vinci family who ever achieved the least distinction was Leonardo's nephew, the sculptor Pierino, whose 'Count Ugolino' is No. 117 in the main sculpture-room of the Bargello in Florence.

Though I cannot go quite as far as those who think that

Leonardo did the whole of the magnificent equestrian statue of Colleone in Venice, I can well believe that the deep love of horses he shared with Verrocchio may have led to a most intimate collaboration in this masterpiece. The numberless sketches for the lost Cavallo, or for the Battle of Anghiari, would alone have testified to that affection. In the studio of Verrocchio it would have most naturally been exemplified in sculpture; and in that sculpture the young Leonardo must undoubtedly have taken a large share. This share is perhaps exaggerated by the enthusiasm of Eugène Müntz (Paris, October 1898); but that it existed is more than sufficient for the purpose of this Essay, which endeavours to throw a little more light on a portion of Leonardo's work, of which the Albizzi Madonna is the sole example hitherto known to have survived; and it may be significant that he, among whose writings so few names are to be found, should have mentioned the method of the Della Robbias, should have boasted to the commissaries of Piacenza Cathedral of the bronze gates of Ghiberti, and should have impressed Vasari with his admiration (elsewhere unrecorded) for Donatello.

It was also the wardens of a church in Piacenza who asked Leonardo's advice as to the choice of a bronze-founder, on which we know how bitterly Michelangelo would have commented; but Leonardo is not a whit perturbed. 'Believe me,' he writes, evidently with the Cavallo in his mind, 'there is no man capable of it but Leonardo, of Florence, who is engaged upon the bronze horse of the Duke Francesco; and he is out of the question, for he has enough work for all the rest of his days' (see Richter, Uzielli, and Müller-Walde).

I have mentioned the name of Giovanni Francesco Rustici. This is the sculptor who had evidently known Leonardo in

Verrocchio's studio, and who gave Leonardo hospitality for several months, after his friend had returned to Florence from Milan, in his own house in the Via dei Martelli. Rustici dabbled in alchemy and attempted the freezing of mercury; but an even greater tie between him and Leonardo must have been the designing of the three bronze statues of St. John preaching between the Levite and the Pharisee. Leonardo is known to have prepared the moulds of these in Florence, and to have designed the framework that protected the group. There is little doubt that he helped in the modelling as well, and he certainly gave advice to another sculptor, Rustici's young friend, Baccio Bandinelli. In Manuscript A (43. r.) of the Library of the Institut de France, Leonardo gives careful technical details (which I need not quote here) of the way to reproduce a marble or bronze statue from the clay model. They are precisely the details he would have required in this work with Rustici, and in other kinds of sculpture, and they are obviously the result of first-hand experience and knowledge.

My preference for the Albizzi Madonna over all the rest reproduced in my 'Table of Comparisons,' has, I hope, been shared by my readers. It does not rest only on the details of that lovely carving. It is founded on the broader and, as I think, the even more certain grounds suggested by the character of its many-sided creator visibly expressed in this work of his hand and brain.

'L'effeto pittorico,' writes Venturi, 'é cura massima dell' artista, che da una successione quase fluida di cavi e di rilievi crea una vicenda armoniosa e morbida di ombre e di luci, lo *sfumato* nella scultura;' and Mr. McCurdy translates the

following passage from Leonardo's manuscript on Painting (MS. 2038. Bib. Nat. 28. r.). 'See that your shadows and lights may blend without strokes or lines in the manner of smoke. . . . Painting is adorned with infinite possibilities of which sculpture can make no use.' The whole of this passage seems to me very valuable in any consideration of the Albizzi carving and I have quoted other parts of it on page 37. It was all written long after the experimental period in Florence of which the Madonna from Sant' Ilario is one trace; and it was only likely that in this carving we should find, as Venturi so rightly points out, the marks of the young artist who is trying to produce in sculpture the effects which (as he was to learn later) are better reserved for painting. There are, if I may suggest the reverse process, several characteristics in his painting (after 1480) which have been compared with the beauties of the sister art. The hands of Mona Lisa are so exquisitely modelled that they seem to stand out from the canvas. The design and execution of the 'Last Supper' so fascinated the sculptors of Milan that it was copied over and over again, in bas-relief, by Stefano da Sesto in the Certosa, by Andrea da Milano, in 1529, and by many others.

With that keen analysis which was his invariable habit, Leonardo has compared literature with painting, painting with sculpture and the other arts. He knew what each could do. He was perpetually experimenting to enlarge their boundaries. A bas-relief, half way, as it were, between sculpture and painting, might well represent his effort to combine the qualities of both; for, since it partakes of some of the conditions which govern painting, it enjoys a wider scope for various effects than sculpture 'in the round,' and permits of just those

delicately-complicated nuances of expression in light and shade which Leonardo loved. In the Albizzi group he entirely refuses to be bound by the ordinary rules of technique in several details, but he has achieved his effect with equal certainty and beauty. As Venturi says: 'Those dreams of the painter, those visions of vague atmosphere, of tenuous shadow that breaks up the compactness of the forms, are all realised in this carving . . . his flowing gradation of hollows and reliefs results in a beautifully blended and harmonious alternation of light and shade. The very singularity of the method and material discloses the effort of the artist to discover a medium appropriate to the vision he created.'

CHAPTER VIII.

The Creation of the Albizzi Madonna.

'In Art we may be said to be the grandsons unto God' (*Leonardo*).

AS was only to be expected, in the case of a carving which remained on the wall of a house for more than four hundred years, the Albizzi carving has suffered more from the lapse of time than any of the groups I reproduced in the third chapter. The Child's right hand has been almost entirely broken off by a blow of some sort, though its position, and the remnants of broken stone in the original (which may be studied in my profile frontispiece), clearly show that it once held a bird. Yet, even here, the boldness of Leonardo's young technique is at once observable. Where Verrocchio turned back this hand, in its 'half-hearted' gesture of blessing, so that it might remain in the three-quarter plane of the relief, Leonardo modelled it at right angles, standing straight out from the stone.

I am not sure whether to put down to damage by rain and weather the Child's smooth and almost hairless head. Careful examination of the original shows a defect in the boy's left arm, which is rather sharply cut away on the upper surface, thus spoiling the rounding-off for the half-relief. This is due, in my opinion, to the fact that during the many years this carving remained uncared for at Sant' Ilario the rain must often have trickled in a little stream round the Boy's head and down his

shoulder and arm, making a slight water-worn channel, the course of which can clearly be perceived.

But of one thing it is possible to be certain: this is a real baby's head, not the grown-up mask of premature intelligence and adult growth, which lesser artists set upon a soft and spineless body. The dignity of this little figure is derived from the fact that it is vertebrate: that it has more backbone than so young a child would actually possess, that it can stand up and hold its little bird and press upon its little apple; and yet the head is the head of an infant, and half the tenderness with which we look at it is inspired by the inimitable grace with which the Mother gently holds it in her arm, looking down upon it with a soft and smiling happiness, which is not only human and intelligible, but also reserved and even reticent in its suggestions of a knowledge she had hidden in her heart.

The extraordinary skill with which Leonardo could add to the interest of the central figure by the expressions of other figures in the composition rises to its highest point in the 'Adoration of the Magi,' but it is as characteristic of all his groups as the treatment of the lips is of his portraits, a treatment which (in the case of the Child) I shall have to examine in greater detail later on. In speaking now more particularly of the Mother, I do not propose to add anything to the lengthy literature of Leonardo's smile; but it may at least be hinted that its source is to be found in Verrocchio's 'David,' or in that 'St. John the Baptist,' in the South Kensington Museum, which is as likely to be by Verrocchio's greater pupil as by the older master. In both you notice the close-lipped curves that are at once their mystery and their

charm, curves very different from the opening mouth of Donatello's 'John the Baptist,' in Berlin, or of the marble roundel of the same subject by Desiderio da Settignano, in the collection of the Marchesa Arconati, in the Louvre. It is because the Child's mouth is open in a wide-lipped laugh, and the Mother has so evident a smile, that I cannot agree with Sir Claude Phillips (1899) in his attribution to Leonardo of the charming terra-cotta group in the South Kensington Museum previously labelled as the work of Antonio Rossellino. The drapery alone (and even the fantastic head-dress) may have suggested Leonardo, but the rest seems to me quite unlike his work. The group does not come into the special series here examined, but I mention it to indicate the truth that a smile is far harder to render in sculpture or painting than a laugh, and that when the greatest artists have depicted a smile it is Leonardo's close-lipped variety which they choose. The best-known example is Franz Hals' 'Laughing Cavalier,' which is worth examination for that special feature.

In the Albizzi carving we see the first deliberate improvement of the pupil on the master. In Verrocchio's Virgin (Fig. V) it is a pretty piece of womanly emotion, a natural joy, as it were, in seeing her son stand so firmly on his cushion, balanced by the lightest touches of her fingers on each side. In Leonardo's (Fig. L) there is the beginning of that finer and more mysterious quality which the young artist was to develop into the full-fledged magic of the 'Mona Lisa.' You see it dawning on the Virgin's lips in the 'Annunciation' of the Louvre. It seems to illuminate her whole figure in the 'Adoration of the Magi,' one of Leonardo's early works in Florence. It sparkles like a radiant enigma in the dusk of the

'Virgin of the Rocks.' It dissolves into the fleeting beauty of a happy dream in the 'St. Anne.' In all of these it pictures the reserve of an awakened soul that knew some secret fire. In all it reveals 'that mystery in beauty which,' as Sir Claude Phillips says, 'is the most distinctive and highest quality of Leonardo.' You will not find it in any other of the series here reproduced.

Yet it is far from alone as a characteristic of Leonardo's workmanship. Consider the differences in the Albizzi carving, which are not ended in the masterly appreciation that the Child's position on his Mother's right side gives a far more natural interpretation to the whole composition. For though these mother's hands are relatively almost exactly as Verrocchio placed them, they now fulfil a natural function in a beautiful way. Her right arm at once supports the infant and shields its naked body with the folds of her dress; but in the right hand it is not the index finger only which (like Verrocchio's) supports the tiny elbow; the three other fingers gently rest upon his body with a curious note of affectionate protection, and it is the left hand which has the lesser task. Instead of grasping the folds behind the Child and without touching him, as in Verrocchio's work, it lightly holds up the drapery that might have pressed against her son, and on the upward curve of the thumb rests the apple—no symbol of the world, we may be sure, but just in Leonardo's mind an apple, which her son presses down with a gesture peculiarly appropriate to the childish fingers that might not have held it firmly otherwise. The bird in the Prato model is undoubtedly an exact copy of the lost original. Nothing could be more characteristic of the subtle fancy of the artist of the

Madonna del Gatto; of the Leonardo whose sketch-books are full of animals, of flowers, of birds that flutter multitudinously through the pages of a whole treatise devoted to the mystery of flight; of the Leonardo who invariably treated this subject of the Holy Family as a charming human episode into which Biblical formulæ and theological conventions did not enter.

It has been felt by one of the few learned critics to whom the Albizzi carving has been submitted (in a photograph) that the composition has not enough life or movement in it for the artist of such dramatic scenes of Scripture as the Last Supper or the Adoration of the Magi, if I name no more. But surely it was Leonardo's own definite pronouncement that (MS. 2038 Bib. Nat. 25 r. and 24 v. translated by McCurdy) 'painting is more beautiful, more imaginative, and richer in resource; sculpture is more enduring but excels in nothing else . . . therefore painting is adorned with infinite possibilities of which sculpture can make no use.' Leonardo, in fact, recognised that the life and movement which he might well introduce upon such canvases as the Virgin of the Rocks were inappropriate to this simpler creation of his youth in stone; and we may also note his own advice upon the subject of this carving: 'Little children should be represented when sitting as twisting themselves about with quick movements, but in shy, timid attitudes when standing up.' He preferred already, it would seem, that far more difficult suggestion of the possibility of movement, of the organic promise in a vitalised repose, which is the true secret of the greatest Greek Art in this manner.

It has been necessary, for the illustration of my argument, to isolate certain details in the Albizzi carving for the purpose

of comparing them with similar details by the same artist or by others; but I should not wish my readers to forget that the whole meaning and significance of the Christ-Child will be misunderstood if it is not realised to be an integral portion of the bas-relief as a whole. It is in this latter sense that I quote an eloquent passage from Venturi's description of the carving before I analyse the details of the Child more closely for what they may reveal:—

'The Virgin smiles as she looks down on her Son, but the Child himself is serious enough, with his soft baby's body that cannot stand alone and is not yet fully formed. The large head is covered with a thin veil of hair; the features are broadly and yet softly treated, and are still somewhat indefinite; but the mouth is exquisitely tender, with its full upper lip gently raised—the mouth of a baby at the breast, of the same lovely child as later shall be worshipped by Leonardo's "Madonna of the Rocks." Beneath the ample curve of the forehead the eyes look out with a wide and pensive gaze, to which the gesso has given that vagueness of the Divine which is so characteristic of all Leonardo's work.'

'*Bocca di poppante*,' says the Italian. You can see the full, protruding upper lip better in the three-quarter view, No. 2, in my 'Table of Children's Heads,' than in the full face reproduced in No. 1. The careful framing of the stone, in its present state, in All Souls College, has prevented me from photographing the exact profile of the Child on its right side, as I might have done when the carving could be examined as it is shown in my frontispiece, as it arrived untouched from Italy. Had I done so, this detail of the upper lip (and another of the lower lip, to be mentioned later) could have been much

more clearly shown. A curious coincidence, however, enables me to emphasise the point from another carving of a Child's head which has a close connection with Leonardo's group.

In the Dreyfus Collection, in Paris, there is a famous bust which has hitherto been attributed to Desiderio da Settignano (1428–1464). I venture to think it is more probably by Antonio Rossellino (1427–1478), and I feel certain that it is a free copy from Leonardo's model for the Christ-Child of the Albizzi group—a type which, as we shall see, is very characteristic of the greater artist.

Comparing the two heads full-face (Nos. 1 and 5 in the 'Table of Children'), we notice that the Dreyfus head is erect and looking straight forward, as would be natural in a bust that might have been meant to stand alone; whereas, not only is the gaze of Leonardo's Child directed slightly downwards, but the whole head is also 'bending sideways' and 'turned in a different direction from that which the breast faces,' a position intimately characteristic of Leonardo's work and of the teaching he has in his own words recorded. Yet there is a peculiarity in both of these heads which is scarcely likely to have occurred to two different artists: one side of the little face is recognisably smaller than the other, and that this curious idiosyncrasy originated (as we should have expected) in Leonardo's carving is perfectly clear from another and far more clumsy copy of the Albizzi group; and you see it conscientiously exaggerated by the Birmingham copyist in my 'Table of Comparisons,' Fig. C.

But, if you compare the three-quarter views of the Leonardo and the Rossellino (Nos. 2 and 6 in my 'Table of Children'), the similarity of the full upper-lip in each is instantly observ-

able, and the exact profile of the Dreyfus bust (*ib.*, No. 7) reveals the feature to be very strongly marked indeed. Until a photograph of the Albizzi Child in the same position can be procured, you must take it to be true that I have observed this characteristic '*bocca di poppante*' just as clearly in Leonardo's carving, and it can be shown to be typical of Leonardo's idea of the Christ-Child from sketches by his own hand for other masterpieces. No. 4, for instance, in my 'Table of Children' is the profile chosen from three exquisite drawings by Leonardo in the Louvre. It was obviously used for the Christ in the finished picture of the 'Virgin of the Rocks,' reproduced in No. 3, and I think the whole series throws a most interesting and valuable light upon the workmanship of the Albizzi group.

It is by no means so improbable as may be imagined that Antonio Rossellino should have made the bust here reproduced, under the inspiration of Leonardo's work, during the last year of his life; for he died suddenly when he was only fifty-one, and therefore this head may quite possibly be one of the series so attractively described by Vasari: '. . . teste di femmine che ridone . . . *e parimente teste di putti.*' The hair in Rossellino's work may very possibly represent what has been lost in the Albizzi infant, owing to the dilapidations of four centuries.

The 'pensive gaze' which appealed to Venturi in the passage I have quoted about Leonardo's Christ has been partly produced by the thickening of the eyelids, another detail laboriously rendered in the Birmingham copy. But the 'serious aspect' so rightly emphasised by the great Italian critic is more important: it is conveyed (in part) by the firm-

ness of the lower lip which, as explained, I cannot here show from the Albizzi carving; for in the photographs here reproduced the shadows are too dark for you to see what I have seen; but the detail is immediately observable in both views of the Rossellino bust given in Nos. 6 and 7, and it is especially obvious and beautiful in the two Leonardo heads from the 'Virgin of the Rocks,' shown in Nos. 3 and 4.

I feel very little doubt that it was some such study for the Albizzi carving which inspired Lomazzo's description (see page 68) of 'the head of Christ in terra-cotta, modelled by Leonardo. 'It displayed,' he says, 'the simplicity and innocence of childhood together with a certain suggestion of wisdom, understanding, and majesty.' For the first time, perhaps, we can now see the actual sculpture which confirms and justifies this most significant phrase. It is re-echoed in Venturi's 'vagueness of the Divine.'

CHAPTER IX.

Science and Art.

IT is no idle question of detail or technique to ask why the halo given to the Albizzi Christ-child was deliberately omitted by Leonardo from the Virgin's head. Save Leonardo only, is there any other artist of that period, and in that work, who would have denied to the Mother what he gave the Son? In that part of his manuscripts sometimes known as the 'Allegories' or 'Enigmas' we find a sentence that seems written as the answer to our problem. It is this: 'There are many who hold the faith of the Son and only build temples in the name of the Mother.' (Cod: Atl: 145. r.a. *McCurdy.*) Though I may not find space here to say much about the faith that Leonardo really held, the philosophy of life that inspired his work and actions without the fetters of a creed, it is essential to point out that the year when Leonardo finished the 'Last Supper' was the year of Savonarola's martyrdom, and that one strange cause of the general ignorance of Leonardo's manuscripts for centuries is that had they been published to the world in his lifetime he would have been burnt at the stake.

This is perhaps one reason why Vasari's original statement that Leonardo 'did not conform to any religion, deeming it better to be a philosopher . . .' was omitted in the second edition of his 'Lives,' and it certainly suggests one

explanation of the fact that at least from 1473 onwards, and probably earlier, he wrote freely and legibly the difficult script from right to left, which can only be deciphered in a mirror, and was particularly easy for a left-handed man. But I do not wish to imply that to-day his writings would shock the susceptibilities of even our sternest British prelate, for in them can be realised not only the highest moral code of conduct, but also the germs of a full score of discoveries that were independently worked out after his death and innocently attributed to other thinkers, and all these discoveries have contributed to that sum of human knowledge which a more enlightened Church has recognised as an essential part of every Christian's mental equipment. I do imply, however, that at the end of the fifteenth century and for a few decades afterwards it was dangerous to write as he did that 'the quotation of authority may involve memory but does not imply intellect,' for the Papacy was drawing ever more and more rigidly the lines of orthodox belief and creating ever more and more numerously the possibilities of a heresy that was punishable by excommunication and by death. The Church of Leonardo's day would have had little sympathy with the creed of his manuscripts: 'It is useless to conduct an argument merely from authorities . . . my arguments are derived solely from experiment, which is the source of all evidence, the one and only mother of true science.'

This consideration need not be enlarged beyond its immediate application to the point before us, nor can it ever, even when emphasised by his well-known dislike of 'hypocritical friars,' have militated against Leonardo's artistic career, which was as much connected with the churches and

monasteries of his period as with the Sforzas or Cæsar Borgias of the age of the Condottiere. But we know that, while Leonardo was working in Verrocchio's *bottega*, he was censured by his guild for forgetting the contribution of his candle to their religious ceremonies; that he was censured again for working (against their ordinances) upon a Saint's Day; and, finally, that, in his treatment of the few religious subjects he chose from Holy Writ, he was the pioneer of a broadly human point of view which was very different from Verrocchio's naturalism and, in many cases, can only have been accepted by the theologian because the real appreciation of the mastery of art had at that very time reached almost its zenith.

'Leonardo da Vinci'—the triumphant syllables of that victorious name conquered even the prejudice of the dogmatists; and his contemporaries surely felt that subtle attractiveness of personality which is echoed by Vasari, that 'beauty of body never to be sufficiently extolled'; that 'endless grace,' that 'dexterity, spirit, and courage, ever royal and magnanimous.' If it were ever true that Style reveals the Man, it is intimately true of Leonardo's paintings. He wrote himself that artists often unconsciously reproduce bodily features of their own; and if the knight, in the foreground of the 'Adoration of the Magi,' be indeed himself (as Bernhard Berenson so finely suggested), he need have had nothing to fear in any such unconscious revelation. But his living personality was better still. His 'divine beauty,' wrote Lomazzo, was such as 'to give peace to every sorrowing soul' (*rasserenare ogni animo mesto*). Something of this serenity, something which brings this consolation, I can see in the grave tenderness of the Albizzi carving; but it was only one side of his many-faceted, independent character, and

those who thought they knew him may never have even recognised the true meaning of his philosophy of life. Of such was Dante before him—Goethe after him. All three possessed that living and constructive energy which assimilates the present that it may fling itself into the future. Few are the prophets with such insight whom their own age and country understand.

Yet the scientific investigator in Leonardo never killed the artist. Indeed, he only hungered to gather facts and truths so that out of them he might create new combinations of his own. The way, as he tells us, in which he created 'monsters,' or 'grotesques,' is but one proof—and the simplest—of a method that went infinitely deeper. For in every great composition, such as the 'Adoration of the Magi,' or 'The Last Supper,' he bent himself to reproduce the truths of Nature in a grouping and with a meaning that were his own. His men and women are not mere backgrounds or accessories. They live and move and think. They love and hate. They come to us from that kingdom of thought which was his science, and they stay with us for ever because his art has given them the eternal interest of humanity. It is this double spirit which makes all his work so individual and so rare. It is this combination of the heart and brain which makes his charm as lasting as it is subtle; for he had the power both to express in his creations and to arouse in all who saw them that fruitful sympathy with beautiful and noble things which is the true essence of his soul. This was because his art was more profoundly based upon his knowledge of science than has been the case in any other of his craft before or since. His genius was a recognisable echo of the fecundity of Nature. He is 'original' because, like her, he can afford to

give with both hands, because the wellspring of his creativeness is as inexhaustible as hers.

His labours may well seem to us, at times, touched with too cold a finger of impersonality. But from them has arisen the warm and glowing image of a personality that will never die. His manuscripts may sometimes seem inspired by a frigid impassiveness of rigorous research. But their writer was one whose gentleness and love of beauty were his most visible characteristics. These things are far from irreconcilable in one who had studied Nature more deeply than any one who lived before him, more widely than any of his contemporaries. Nature, as he wrote, was to him 'the only mother of Knowledge;' and he never shrank from any manifestations of a natural law—from death or birth, from agony or rage, from passion or insanity. All were the phenomena of a world that he could study—the interplay of causes and effects above which his own intellect and soul could rise superior, unmoved and undismayed.

Leonardo contemplates his universe without inherited fears or pieties, yet without impiety or irreverence. Whatever he sees is not an image, but itself; something that he is personally capable of rejecting or accepting, without the help or hindrance of tradition; for 'authority' is nothing to him; the theme dictates the picture; the fact itself is sacred, and only in relation to it can the true soul fulfil itself.

'The best painting,' he wrote, 'is that which is most like the thing painted—a consideration which exposes all the shame of those artists who wish to correct Nature, whose spirit is so corrupted that they will tell you "Nature is wrong" if she does not agree with their ideas of what she ought to be.' In

Art, therefore, Leonardo was no more bound by the Renaissance than he was in Religion by Authority. He has occasionally imitated the classical ideal in his manuscript sketches, with the apparent desire of comparing it with his own deliciously lifelike studies from nature. His Madonna is no longer the image of a cult. Verrocchio's model shows that the change in sentiment had come already. To him she was already a living woman. But to Leonardo she was woman, virgin, child and mother, all in one.

It speaks volumes for the attractive personality of Leonardo, and for the commanding genius of his art, that he was beloved and admired by a generation with which he never cared to mingle, and that his legend lasted and will last for ever, though it is based on fewer finished masterpieces than any painter of his quality has left behind him. Raphael and Michael Angelo, with all the immensity of their output, could never rival him. True it may be that the affection he inspired and the good fortune which attended him in youth and middle age were counterbalanced by a death in exile and by the loss or incompleteness of nearly every great thing he ever did. Yet he has remained upon the pinnacle he had reached by 1480. And let it never be forgotten that those contemporaries who loved him best of all had never seen the most amazing proof of his genius—the manuscripts which anticipated so many generations of subsequent discovery and research. These extraordinary documents have told us more of Leonardo's real power than any one who knew him could have realised. They open new vistas of achievement and creation which even the fruitful fifteenth century of Florence never guessed. Among them, and deservedly, can now be

placed that single relic of his sculpture which has hitherto been found. Let us hope that the Albizzi Madonna will not be the only one that coming years shall welcome.

Posterity has perhaps been too much inclined to forget the manuscripts and to judge Leonardo solely by the very few paintings (some of them unfinished) which are certainly by his hand. Even if the Albizzi Madonna finds some gentle comrade, they will together add comparatively little to the quantity of his work that may be rightly measured. Yet by the standard of the spirit which cares little for the thing achieved but much for the quality of mind that won it, Leonardo will for ever be accepted as the type of artist who spared no labour in his effort to realise his ideal of beauty. The short Essay of which these pages form a part is written for an immediate purpose; I cannot here begin to analyse that mass of scientific and philosophical inquiry which has been described in ampler volumes. But I cannot neglect it as if it were non-existent, in this consideration of a work which definitely raises a religious question and has hitherto found no parallel in the legacy of its great creator. The artist of the Albizzi group was the man who could plan the delicate humour of a Madonna del Gatto, or poise the Virgin on her Mother's knee—or take the halo from her sacred head, if he preferred the more subtle imaginings of his loops and whorls and curving lines of headdress as her crown. To him she was the woman and the mother caring for the child who cared for birds and apples. To him the divinity in both was but the highest expression of the humanity and beauty in every son and mother; and if but one is to have the halo, it shall be the manchild, not the woman. When, with the sheer

loveliness we should expect from Leonardo's art, we also find exactly that curious omission which we should anticipate from the teachings of his manuscripts, there need surely be little doubt of his authentic handiwork left in the mind of the most sceptical of critics.*

If it was necessary to recall a little of his science and philosophy in order to appreciate Leonardo's artistic methods, it is still more essential to consider the question of women and their influence in a carving which has so lately dowered the world with one of the most charming imaginations of a mother's tenderness. The sculptor of the Albizzi Group left many an indication of his favourite type of womanhood before the days when his Madonna grew to beauty under his hands in Florence. They provide the subject of my final chapter.

* It is impossible to assert that no other artist has ever done the same, when we remember the Pistoria lunette (Marquand, Andrea I., fig. 123), the Casole Nativity (ib. Giovanni, fig. 131), the Altona Altarpiece, the Bottigli Madonna, or especially the Turin Adoration (ib. Buglioni, figs. 53, 101, 96); and in the later stucco variant of Luca della Robbia's Corsini Madonna (Marquand, fig. 161) from the Hainauer collection, the Child has a pronounced halo and the Virgin neither halo nor crown. The Medici ring in the Worcester (U.S.A.) Museum might also be added to a list by no means complete. My point here is that whereas the detail in these works was very probably accidental, in the Leonardo group the choice is both deliberate and characteristic.

CHAPTER X.

Leonardo's Studies of Women.

PROFESSOR JENS THIIS has very cleverly and accurately reconstituted the 'note-book' in which most of the work done by the young Leonardo in Florence (before 1482) was evidently preserved. It now exists only in scattered leaves in various museums. But its sketches have been examined by Berenson as well as by Thiis, and I shall here mention none that have not the recent authority of one or the other of these brilliant students. Oxford, where the Albizzi Madonna rests as I write these lines, owns at Christ Church two allegorical sketches by Leonardo of the period of her creation. A third (in the University Gallery) represents a group of soldiers. But the earliest is in the Uffizi and is the landscape sketch (dated August 5, 1473) which I have already mentioned. The next has been reproduced (page 39), and is dated 1478 (Uffizi No. 446, with which may be compared No. 449). But it is a sheet at Windsor which is most closely connected with the subject of this chapter. It is of a large size, but when folded is seen to be 28 cm. by 20 cm. almost exactly that of the manuscript (No 446 in the Uffizi) which provided the date of the Albizzi carving.

There are eleven profiles on one side and thirteen on the other, and when you look at them Vasari's words come back to you at once: 'Never has any one equalled Leonardo in such perfect representation of naturalness, goodness, beauty, and grace.' The drawings, in flowing pen and ink, must be of about 1478 or slightly earlier. They represent the same type of face in a youth, a girl, and an old man. They might almost be the same family, and the old man is certainly the same model as was drawn on the sheet in the Uffizi dated 1478. Very possibly (as has been suggested) one may see the most distinguished representative of that family in the knight in the foreground of the Adoration. Certainly the type is reproduced magnificently in the splendid Condottiere of the Malcolm Collection, which is of the same period.

There is an interesting study on the back of the Windsor manuscript of a Madonna in the open air (Berenson 1170). But the face of the young girl which is drawn several times, both on the front and back, is undoubtedly by the hand which modelled the Albizzi Madonna. And that Madonna is still more clearly foreshadowed in the famous drawing at Windsor of the woman's bending head with half-closed eyes and flowing curls which is reproduced in No. 2 of my 'Table of Women's Heads.'

In a previous chapter I recalled Vasari's famous phrase about the 'smiling women'; let me now compare it with one of Leonardo's manuscripts which I have already quoted from Mr. McCurdy's invaluable translations (2038 Bibl. Nat. 17. v.). In this occurs the following sentence: 'Women should be represented in modest attitudes, with their heads low and bending sideways.' In the Albizzi carving the head is not 'low,' for

the Madonna stands upright; but the soft lines on her neck and the eyes downcast towards her Son exactly indicate that 'bending sideways' which Leonardo recommended. 'Always,' he wrote again, in the manuscript on *Painting*, 'so dispose your figures that the direction in which the head is turned is not that which the breast faces, since Nature has for our convenience so formed the neck that it can easily serve the different occasions on which the eye desires to turn in various directions.' Though we may happily compare the delicate curves of the Albizzi head-dress, and especially the little waft of rippling ribbons above the Madonna's left shoulder, with the treatment of the same theme by Verrocchio, or with the copies which lesser artists strove to take from Leonardo, we can instantly recognise the true touch of the great Master in the head and neck of the Albizzi carving when we compare it with the angular and frigid pose of such compositions as that reproduced in my 'Table of Comparisons,' Fig. H.

With this appreciation in our minds, let us look again at other drawings by Leonardo. We find the same attitude in the Windsor study of head-dress, shown in my 'Table of Women,' No. 3; in the head-dress with a veil, from the same great collection, which was a sketch (No. 4, *ib.*) for the St. Anne; in the beautifully finished head of the 'Virgin of the Rocks' (Louvre), with the lovely eyelids (No. 5, *ib.*) that so exactly recall the Albizzi carving. Even more interesting to me, from the associations I seem to see in it with the peasant girls of Caterina's village, is the exquisite silver-point on tinted paper in the Louvre, which was evidently drawn direct from a model in the Monte Albano district. She is reproduced in No. 7 of the 'Table of Women,'

and, if you look at the Albizzi profile I have placed beside her, you can have no doubt left that the same hand created both.

But it is neither material nor models, neither documents nor history, which can afford us the convincing proof of Leonardo's touch that shines out so unmistakably from the beauty of the Albizzi Madonna. She embodies a conception of motherhood which makes every contemporary copy seem insipid, meaningless, and almost inane. Can we fail to recognise that this group of the Madonna and her Child is not of those which offer all their superficial charms at once to any hasty courtier, but is a masterpiece that surrenders slowly, as the mind of the spectator gradually appreciates the beauty which appeals to trained and sympathetic eyes?

'Her soft hands are delicately rounded,' says Venturi, 'with an almost tremulous appearance, as if they were indefinite in outline . . . the curled ringlets of her hair are gently entangled in the twisted veil, the ends of which float airily above her shoulder, with the same lightness that in his paintings Leonardo so much loved when he let loose the tresses of his model for the breeze to play with. Finally, most typical of Leonardo is the restrained smile which curves the Virgin's sensitive lips, and seems to impart a well-nigh imperceptible tremor to her eyelids and to all her features.'

'*Fils naturel*,' writes Gabriel Séailles, '*recueilli par son père, Léonard se passa de cette influence maternelle que doit subir tout grand homme qui se respecte.*' It is true that to his mother, Caterina, who died before 1504, Leonardo does not devote even the brief observation accorded to the loss of his

father; and it is interesting to note, in passing, that the records both of his father's death (on July 9th, 1504) and of what may be his mother's funeral are in London. I wish it were possible to think that the beautiful peasant girl's head reproduced in my 'Table of Women,' No. 7, represented Caterina; but she would have been far too old when this was drawn, in 1478, for any such romantic delineations, and I fear we must recognise that few Italian women of the late fifteenth century—even the noblest and the loveliest—lasted in beauty after forty years of age. We may more easily imagine that Leonardo was thinking of his mother when he wrote of the 'mountain girls, in their rough rags, whose beauty far surpasses that of ladies better dressed.'

But we must not argue that the filial sentiments which M. Séailles seems so much to miss were not existent merely because we find no clear trace of them in Leonardo's manuscripts. Those note-books or diaries, voluminous as they are, show a greater reticence than any other similar records approaching them in length. It hardly occurred to their writer that his own feelings or emotions were worth anything at all outside his art. If he says nothing of his mother's death, it is, perhaps, still more extraordinary that he should never have permitted himself the solace of a syllable about the destruction of the Cavallo, on which he had spent so many fruitless years of toil in Milan. He was entirely aloof from that feverish anxiety for self-revelation which has made so much modern art and literature of merely pathological interest. Never could the *argumentum ex silentio* be less appropriately invoked. The tragedy of Il Moro, Leonardo noted as briefly as his father's death: 'The Duke has lost his State, his possessions, and his

liberty, and none of his works has he seen finished.' There are very few names in the manuscripts at all. Only one woman is named throughout their mass of writing, and this is what is said of her: 'Giovannina has a fantastic face; she lives in S. Catherine's Hospital.'

Yet how misguided was Eugène Muntz in imagining that, 'like Donatello, Leonardo was one of those exceptionally great artists in whose life the love of women seems to have played no part.' The truth, as I see it, was very different. One of the tenderest passages in his manuscripts (Codice Atlantico 71. r.a.) is his lament that women must grow old: 'O envious age, thou devourest all things with the hard teeth of the years, little by little, in slow death! Helen, when she looked into her mirror and saw the withered wrinkles which old age had made in her face, wondered to herself why she had twice been carried off by lovers. O envious age, whereby all things are consumed! . . .' To Leonardo, women must have meant so much that he could find no words to speak of them, could give no name to what had kindled the deepest fires in that refined and reticent and sensitive personality. Where Giorgione or Raphael or Andrea del Sarto lost life and even honour for their loves, where Michael Angelo abandoned his charity for all men in his sombre passion for Vittoria Colonna, there Leonardo had his secret garden, and above it was engraved the motto he may have adapted from Petrarch: 'Cosa bella mortal passa e non d'Arte.'

To interpret the one outcry which he permitted to his silent soul, as if it meant that he cared nothing for women in comparison with art, is to misunderstand his whole outlook upon life. 'Beauty passes, but art is eternal.' It is the teaching

of Théophile Gautier later on, as of Horace long before him —neither of them woman-haters. To Leonardo it implied that, since so much loveliness must die, he would spare no pains to choose the best to whom he might give immortality. To the very essence of a woman he dedicated the most marvellous portrait the world has ever seen—Mona Lisa Gioconda. In this, wrote Pierre de Corlay, 'there is tenderness, there is coquetry, there is modesty, there is hidden passion; all the mystery of a heart that is itself in reserve, of a brain that reflects; of one who guards her own individuality and only sheds its radiance on others . . . she shows them her whole self and yet gives them nothing. The source of her thoughts, the deep reason of her smile, the spark which has put that strange light in her eyes—all are mysteriously hidden.'

To woman, the sacred receptacle and precious shrine of life renewed, Leonardo devoted some of the most astounding pages of his anatomical drawings and dissections; to woman, from girlhood to maturity, he consecrated some of the most exquisite sketches and studies which the hand of man has ever drawn. And he loved women as he drew them—for their charm, their purity, their sensuousness, their motherhood, their grace, their hearts, their souls.

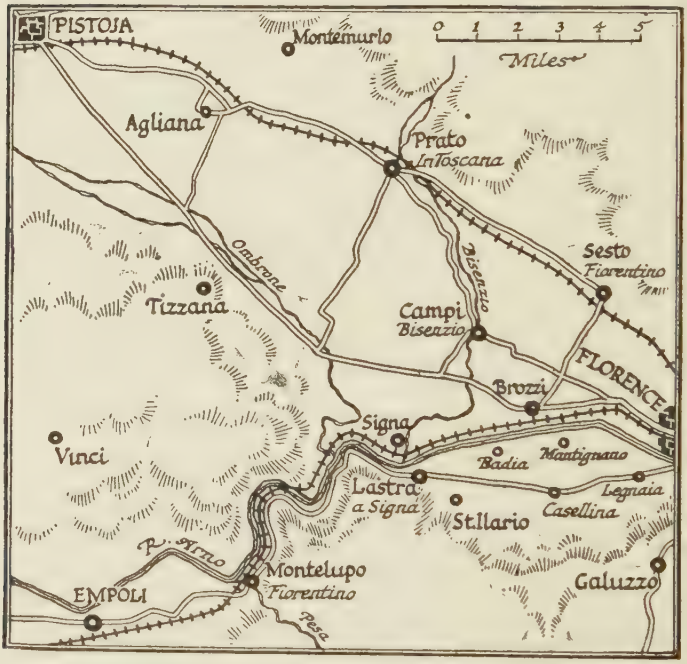
Quo fugit Venus heu quove color decens
Quo motus? Quid habes illius illius
Quae spirabat amores . . .?

For many a hundred blinded years the stone of Leonardo's carving cried out of the wall of Albizzi's house in Sant' Ilario. That voice from the dead, that proudly reticent appeal for

recognition, shall now no longer be unheard. From our continued search for detailed knowledge—which is by no means ended yet—each ray of light, starting from whatever direction we have chosen, has converged and concentrated upon a single point, illuminating the justice and the certainty of Venturi's bold conclusion: 'For all these reasons, the Madonna seems to me to be indisputably the work, and, as far as we know to-day, the only work in sculpture we possess, of Leonardo.'

THE END.

MAP SHOWING ST. ILARIO AND FLORENCE.



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